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THE CRITIC'S ARMOURY

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RUDYARD KIPLING : A CRITICAL STUDY

THE HISTORY OF THE 36TH (ULSTER) DIVISION

THE CRITIC'S ARMOURY

By CYRIL FALLS

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A BERNARD DE KERGORLAY

Mon cher ami,

Je viens vous offrir ici quelques pages de critique, particulièrement quelques unes sur les écrivains de votre pays. Il y a bien longtemps que l'étude de la littérature française a été à la fois ma tâche et mon plaisir. Mais, pour arriver à comprendre une littérature, un étranger a besoin d'autre chose que de ses livres ; ceux-ci n'étant que expression de sa Vie.

Si, par exemple, j'ai su comprendre l'esprit de la France, humilité avant la guerre et aux abois pendant, cet esprit dont on trouve le miroir dans l'œuvre de Maurice Barrès, c'est surtout grâce à vous. (Souvenez-vous de nos promenades dans la jolie vallée brumeuse de l'Avre à Boves, les soirs de ce sombre mois de juillet, 1918 ; moins sombre cependant que nous ne croyions, puisqu'il ne fut que la nuit avant l'aube de la victoire ?) Et si j'ai goûté le charme de cette vie à Paris et dans les châteaux de la France, dans laquelle les livres de Marcel Proust sont encadrés, c'est encore à vous que je dois ce bonheur.

Vous êtes, donc, mon cher ami, l'inspirateur de plusieurs de ces pages. Il est juste que je vous les dédie, en hommage de ma reconnaissance et de ma sincère amitié.

CYRIL FALLS.

Londres,

Septembre, 1924

THE majority of these essays appeared originally in the *Adelphi*, the *Fortnightly Review*, the *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, the *Literary Supplement of The Times*, the *London Mercury*, and the *Nineteenth Century and After*. Most of them are now in altered form and in some cases have been largely rewritten. Certain other published articles have been drawn upon, notably several articles in *The Times* for the essay on Marcel Proust. To the Editors of these newspapers and reviews I desire to make my acknowledgments.

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The Critic's Armoury

THERE is no subject more fertile of discussion among critics than that of the functions of criticism. I say advisedly, among critics, for I do not suppose that a large proportion of the public, even of the bookish part of it, cares greatly for our distinctions. But every man asks himself sometimes the question : " What am I here for ? What is my use in the world ? " And the critic, more introspective than most men, asks it often. He is, moreover, in a unique and delightful position. He can ask the question aloud, so that a fair number of the reading public must hear, however bored. As if that were not titillation enough for any man's egotism, he is then spared the agony of listening to other people's opinions and permitted to answer his own question himself—once more aloud. Small wonder that the subject should be one of his favourites !

Pleasant—to myself at least—as this topic is, it is not precisely that which I propose to discuss now, though the latter is closely akin to it. But, as is only to be expected, having come close to it, I cannot pass it by without touching it for a moment. But in that moment my plea shall be for moderation.

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The fashionable theory of criticism appears to be that most boldly voiced by one of the best of the younger English critics, Mr. Middleton Murry. He asserts that the primary function of criticism is to provide the critic with a mode of self-expression. This has been called the "creative" theory of criticism. Taken literally, it is hard to see how the statement is logically to be supported. As Mr. T. S. Eliot, another in the foremost rank, remarks, "criticism, by definition, is *about* something other than itself." It is not a spontaneous growth. Can it, then, be literally creative? The idea involves a contradiction in terms. In a certain and very subtle sense the great critic may claim that he so identifies himself with his subject, follows the hand that drives the chisel, enters into the mental struggle which brings to birth the piece of art, that he may almost claim a part in its creation. Especially is this so if he contrives to put a new interpretation upon it or reveal to his readers what they had not grasped before concerning it. The art of Sandro Botticelli has never been quite the same to the world since Walter Pater's essay of fifty years ago. He did something *for* those pictures that almost amounted to doing something *to* them. Almost, but not quite. Even here we strain good sense if we use the term "creative." One of the cleverest, as the most amusing, of the attempts to establish this position was that of Oscar Wilde in *The Critic as Artist*. He appealed to experience. Or it may be backed by the metaphysical argument that beauty is not a quality in things themselves, but exists in the mind which contemplates them.

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In either case the intelligence beats down the over-subtle reasoning, and we remain unconvinced that anyone can filch from the creative artist any share in the credit of his achievement.

If Mr. Murry would be content to declare that the finest criticism is that which is produced by an original artist, it were easier to follow him. Let us leave out the term "creative," as too indefinite for our use. We can still be served well enough by "original," whilst "artist" will be denied by few save bigots. For, at his highest, the critic is no mere slave to his subject or the subject's author. He is definitely an artist and definitely original; with claim as good to both noun and adjective as his who introduces a traditional ornament into a beautiful piece of tapestry. And when Mr. Murry goes on to declare, as a development of his thesis, that the first duty of a critic is to assess and rank, then the great majority will agree with him.

And yet, in this even, a word of caution is needed. The critic as pontiff—shall we say?—may have first place, but he is not far above the critic as interpreter, the critic as historian, or even that rather dull fellow the critic as textual expert. There is room for all, and the man who combines all in his own person has probably never existed. Those of us who can scarcely hope to be more than interpreters, who are laughed at or ignored when we try to pontificate, may take heart of grace. We have the chance to do honourable work. We can all have our part in the task of criticism, which is, after all, in the widest sense, the formation of a standard of taste.

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I set out, however, to consider an aspect of the question to my mind more important, not the function of criticism so much as the equipment and method of the critic. And here I admit no distinction between critic and reviewer. If the reviewer is worth his salt, he is a critic ; that or nothing. Anyone who can write his language tolerably can give a short *résumé* of a book and state whether it has appealed to him or not. When he begins to explain why he holds it good or bad, he is bringing his critical faculties into play. How, then, should a critic be armed for the fray ? How should he wield his weapons ?

It is not, I trust, to speak as a prig to set candour and courage at the head of the list of qualities, and the former first of the two. Timid criticism is poor stuff, but less malignant than dishonest criticism. A bold and candid verdict may serve, even if later held to be mistaken, to illumine an aspect, to fix a point of view, that deserves to be saved from neglect. With a vast amount of the criticism of Johnson literary opinion to-day is out of sympathy, but there is little of it that has not its value for us. A good bold error is less shameful than a stammering verdict that may be taken either way. This is not to say that the critic should never hedge, but even hedging can be done boldly. There are times when he will feel he is not sure. Far better to say so openly than to disguise the statement so that it shall not thereafter "be used in evidence against him at the trial."

Delicacy of taste must follow. It is not set first only because it is of small worth without those

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others, whilst they may sometimes serve their turn when taste is defective. Broadly speaking, however, it is the most important weapon in the critic's armoury. His possession of it is his *raison d'être*. That, it may be objected, is a platitude. The sole difficulties are to define it and decide who has it.

David Hume, in *The Standard of Taste*, one of the finest essays on criticism in our language, helps us to do both. He quotes the boast of Sancho Panza to Don Quixote that judgment in wine was a quality hereditary in his family. Two of his kinsmen were asked to give an opinion on a hog's-head. The first, after tasting the wine and reflecting long, said that it was good, but for a slight flavour of leather. The second also gave a favourable verdict, save that he detected a taste of iron. Their judgment was ridiculed. But when the hog'shead was emptied there was found at the bottom an iron key, with a leathern thong tied to it.

The resemblance, says Hume, between bodily and mental taste teaches us to apply this story. The delicacy of taste which analyses and disintegrates the various qualities of a work of art is akin to that of Sancho's relations, who detected the iron and the leather. Every one knows the taste of iron and of leather presented singly. If, when present in but small degree, blended with other and perhaps stronger flavours, they affect the palate, then the man who recognizes them can lay claim to delicacy of taste. The parable is yet more to the point if it be noted that neither of Sancho's kinsmen caught

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the tangs both of iron and leather. Such delicacy is rare and possessed only by the greatest of critics. If one of the tribe finds the iron and his colleague the leather, each has right to honour and has done good service.

Sancho's kinsmen, mocked at for their absurd conclusions, had the laugh on their side when the hogshead was emptied. It may be urged that in the critic's case the hogshead is never emptied, or emptied only a long time after his death. But the critic does not stake his reputation upon one hogshead. He is a taster by profession. He sips wine of all sorts, white and golden and crimson ; from vessels of all sorts, great tun to little keg that he can carry under his arm. Some of them, indeed, are not emptied in his lifetime. A few, it may be, are never drained so dry that the world can say with certainty if that object at the bottom be really a key or no. It is possible that there will be always in such cases a school that will maintain it to be a corkscrew. But, on the whole, it is surprising how often the vessel is swiftly emptied. The delicacy of the critic's taste can as a rule be judged by those that are, before he is an old man. Sometimes a wine is drunk with acclamation for a few years and declared to be the cream of its vintage. Then comes one who cries out that there is a certain vile taste in it, and, not waiting for the cask to be emptied, plunges his arm in, drags out the abomination, and displays it to the discomfited drinkers. The taster will assuredly make mistakes now and then, but he will make fewer as time goes on and he becomes practised in his art.

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That leads to the next qualification, again following Hum^d. It is practice. There is little to say of it, but only the critic himself knows how needful it is. In Hume's day it had to be got as a rule at the expense of the critic's patron ; to-day it must be acquired at the expense of his editors, or even in some dreadful cases at his own, should they be so base as to return his contributions.

From practice follows that which it inevitably implies—comparison—which leads us back to the general function of criticism. Candour and courage are the critic's safeguards, delicacy of taste the gift that fits him for his work, practice that which gives him precision and ease. The setting of standards, the giving of rank, classification, are the machinery of his method. We can hardly reach a conception of beauty or ugliness without comparison. The critic must constantly compare the poet, the novelist, the dramatist with his predecessors, his contemporaries, and his successors. For this purpose he will find it helpful to employ certain labels, which have the same sort of serviceableness as algebraical signs in working out certain problems. It is astonishing how many critics object hotly to these and attack their brothers who employ them. Classic, romantic, realist, symbolist—these adjectives are to them like red rags to a bull. If the critic shuts his subjects up into these schools as water-tight compartments, then he is indeed at fault and deserving of reproof. Men's minds are infinitely dissimilar ; so are the expressions that flow from them ; nor are any two subject to influences precisely the same. But we cannot escape

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from the labels if we desire to point out the effects of tradition, or fashion, or environment. We need regard them as symbols only, used for convenience and not to be taken quite literally; just as when we say, "Let x be the output of the pipe in one hour," we do not mean that the water which flows from the pipe in that time actually *is* x . And these distinctions, if not pressed too far, are true. There was, for example, an Italian influence in this country in the earlier seventeenth century, and later a French influence, which brought along with it a classical influence. There was a romantic revolt something over a hundred years ago. And there has been a realistic movement more recently. Moreover, men are, in fact, influenced by their times, by their environment, by the work or the teaching of some master in their craft. Every now and then there appears a writer, a Jonson, a Boileau, or a Taine—and the case is not very different with other arts—who stamps his personality upon an epoch. It is mere pedantry to protest against the disciple of such an one being classed as of the school of Jonson, Boileau, or Taine, just because he differs from his master in some respects and expands his own personality as he goes on. Let the critic refuse to be frightened out of the admirable practice of classification and generalization. Otherwise he will double the difficulty of his task of finding order out of apparent chaos. But, once again, let classification be his tool and not his fetish.

The last weapon is knowledge, which in a literary critic would be equivalent to reading, were all men's memories equally good. The question as to what

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constitutes a well-read man is really harder to answer than that as to how we are to detect delicacy of taste. Books are a subject of which we can touch only the fringe, however steadily we read and however long we live. By a great and long-sustained effort we might attain a practical mastery of all that is of value in our own literature up to fifty years ago—thereafter is the jungle, which none can wholly conquer—and master a second literature as well as a foreigner can. Mr. Saintsbury may be said to have done so much with English and French. But, let us say, we desire to be good critics before we reach Mr. Saintsbury's age, as he himself was. It may be, also, that we have less leisure for reading than he has had. How much must we have read before we are fit to act as *cicerone* to others in the paths of literature?

It is obvious that no critic can set out as a guide to all kinds of literature. To do so might do credit to his courage, but would be a poor tribute to his honesty. If you pick up at random a number of *The Times Literary Supplement*, you will find half a dozen articles upon subjects as far apart as Byzantine Papyri and the Cantijas of Alonzo the Sage, in each of which the writer assumes in his readers a wide knowledge of his subject. Each has, in fact, a number of readers possessed of such knowledge. But among the tens of thousands of readers of that journal it is improbable that there is one who is expert in all the subjects. There is assuredly none on its staff qualified to write upon them all.

Must the critic, then, be a specialist? By no

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means. In fact, to be that and no more almost precludes his being a critic in the sense already defined, because his comparisons must then be made in a field so limited. But he ought to have made a special study of some particular branch of literature. When the important book in that kind appears, his editor should know that if it be put into his hands justice will be done, so far as is humanly possible, and the good name of the journal maintained. More important still—for criticism in itself is indeed more important than the good name of any one journal—will be the effect of that knowledge upon all his own work. The subject will serve him as a stronghold, from which to sally forth in raids, to which to retreat when the clans are up. It will enrich his mind, and never cease to serve him well when he adventures upon others. I think I may add that he ought to have a sound knowledge of at least one literature other than his own. This will serve him not so much as a stronghold of retreat as a well-equipped advanced base, wherein he may establish himself to conduct operations far from home. For the rest, let him take what comes, reading as pleasure, leisure, and the demands of his work dictate. He at least has not to fear the proverb : being jack of all trades does not imply that he is master of none.

That completes the armoury, for it is scarce necessary to add that the better he writes, the more captivating his style, the happier will be the results ; while to attack that problem would demand a whole essay in itself. We have our critic otherwise fully accoutred ; we may presuppose that he can make

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good use of what he has, that he is a pretty man with his pen.

Could such a paragon as I have sketched in my search for perfection be found, he would indeed speak with authority, *de par le Roi*. But not he nor a tribe of his like would make the standard of taste rigid and without exceptions. To return once more to Hume ; although in his time criticism was more formal and narrower than it is to-day, he recognizes that " there still remain two sources of variation, which are not sufficient, indeed, to confound all the boundaries of beauty and deformity, but will often serve to produce a difference in the degrees of our approbation or blame. The one is the different humours of particular men ; the other, the particular manners and opinions of our age and country." It has been said that good taste is not a matter of opinion, but a matter of fact. We cannot control " the different humours of particular men " so closely as a literal interpretation of that statement would imply. Those different humours must, indeed, be kept within certain bounds, and, if they exceed them, must be held in their excess to err against taste. The bounds themselves can only be decided by argument in each instance. But obviously, apart from such little personal predilections as a favourite " bedside book," there must be certain variations in the order of greatness to be found in the judgments of individual men. If I set Campbell above Wordsworth, I stand condemned by the overwhelming verdict of the jury. But there is no verdict which I need recognize to reprove me for my preference for *Tristram Shandy* to *Tom Jones*,

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for *The Newcomes* to *David Copperfield*, for Keats to Shelley, for Racine to Corneille. Nay, if any scowl when I declare I find more pure loveliness, see more clearly the authentic "brand of beauty tost," in *The Flower and the Leaf* than even in *The Faerie Queene*, then, though I do not bite my thumb at him, I bite my thumb.

So with "the particular manners and opinions of our age and country." In great literature there is a fashion ; far more in that just less than great. If, to take an example at random, the record and memory of one poem from Cowley's *Mistress*, let us say that which opens with the lines,

Ask me not what my love shall do or be
(Love, which is soul to body, and soul of me),

were to be blotted out, and retained in the mind of one man only ; if he, unprincipled ruffian, were to present it to the *London Mercury* as his own work, it is possible that the editor, one of our ablest and most catholic critics of poetry as he is, might refuse it. Yet Mr. Squire, with *The Mistress* in one hand and a bound volume of his review in the other, would probably admit that when the sun has burnt itself out and the world has died, and all earthly singers are silent ; when the weeping muses inscribe the poets' last roll of honour on their golden leaves ; those stanzas of Cowley's will have a place higher than some of those which he has published. Was he wrong to have refused them, then ? Let us say only, he was human.¹

¹ I am here, I need hardly say, using symbols for my argument. Cowley and Mr. Squire alike serve but as those others, the use of

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Let it be noted also that it is in poetry rather than any other branch of literature that there are these changes of fashion, and that the greatest fluctuations in another art are those in music. The more directly the appeal is to the imagination, the wider will be the diversity of opinion regarding it in successive ages.

Some there be who would give the professional literary critic a very low place. It has been declared, even though perhaps half chaffingly, that he is a parasite of letters. It may not become one who is the least of the brotherhood and hardly worthy to be called a brother at all to champion men better able to defend themselves than he to aid them ; yet he cannot restrain his admiration for their effort and its results. There is careless, shoddy work done in plenty, and some dishonest work, though I believe less of this latter in England than elsewhere. But is there any branch of letters in which the general level is higher, in which serious incompetence is rarer, or mere play to the gallery more firmly eschewed, or devotion to a high ideal more common ? Every day we see some new avenue opened, some new glory revealed, some greatness introduced to the public by the critics, often by those who are ranked as minor. As for the great ones, their debt is one that there is no coin to pay. Studies such which I have advocated. But I must confess I chose first *The Change*, beginning,

Love in her sunny eyes does basking play ;

Love walks the pleasant mazes of her hair,

and then scored it out. That, I felt, was absurd, so utterly incredible was it that Mr. Squire should refuse *The Change* !

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as those of Pater in the Renaissance or Mr. Gosse in the Seventeenth Century have drawn in their many thousands to the eternal amphitheatre of art and staged for them a show that has enriched their whole lives. Bold would he be who would declare that the value of such books and the pleasure they have created are less than those of a great romance.

The lesser man may, indeed, feel that he comes of an honourable line. He may not be able to equal the achievements of those who have gone before him or of some of his contemporaries. But if he has something like the requisite armoury, even though certain of his weapons be not of the most perfect temper ; if he is determined to use them with all his might and all the craft that is in him ; if he is vowed to see to it that they are kept clean ; then he can enter the combat well assured that he will not bring discredit upon the one or the other.

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“THE two cardinal points of poetry,” it was agreed by Coleridge and Wordsworth in one of their conversations, are “the power of exciting the sympathy of the reader by a faithful adherence to the truth of Nature, and the power of giving the interest of novelty by the modifying colours of the imagination.” If, on the one hand, we extend the word “Nature” to include man and his works, his pains and pleasures, and, on the other, the word “imagination” to include those mysterious exhalations from the immaterial world which sometimes, as in the case of Coleridge’s own *Kubla Khan*, seem to amount to frank sorcery, we shall find the definition satisfactory. With these qualifications, for example, it is easy to place Pope, who is manifestly a great poet, though his imagination is not highly coloured, though he is not greatly interested in Nature, in the narrow usage of the term. We shall agree that in fact all that which we call poetry lies between the one and the other, inclining now to the former point, now to the latter. We shall probably conclude that as a rule the greatest genius lies most nearly equidistant between the two. This is certainly true of Milton and Words-

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worth, two of the greatest and most representative of English poets, though with the first the needle points rather to imagination than Nature, and with the second the reverse is the case. But the Milton of *Paradise Lost* is also the Milton of *Il Penseroso*, our finest pastoral lyric. And where in our language are the two influences more happily combined than in *Tintern Abbey* and the *Ode on the Intimations of Immortality*? Nor is Shelley even an exception to this rule. The men at the extremes will generally be of the second order of poets.

As an example of one sort we may cite the poet Crabbe, whose realism is little illumined by "the modifying colours of the imagination." If the author of *Phæbe Dawson* be at one pole, Richard Crashaw is at the other. If the first be of the earth earthy, the second is of the sky skiey. Crashaw, indeed, at his best fulfils the conception of the poet as an ethereal being, whose eyes are fixed upon a world that those of grosser vision see not, whose feet scarce touch the clay of this in his passage through it, who shines with a light reflected from divine fires. The foremost characteristic of his poetry, that from which springs his chief fascination, which compensates for his faults, is ecstasy. Now we are inclined to consider the Englishman a stolid individual, but it is a fact that ecstasy is very common in English poetry. It is its lack that so often disappoints English readers of French poetry, where they find no Crashaw, no Shelley, no Francis Thompson. Allied with this ecstasy is mysticism, wherein also English literature, from Vaughan to Coventry Patmore, is rich. What is

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remarkable about Crashaw is that his mysticism is not typically English—is, in fact, most un-English. He stands alone, not only among English poets, but among English Catholic mystics.

Richard Crashaw was born in London, at some date between July, 1612, and July, 1613, of Protestant clerical stock. He was educated at the Charterhouse. The exact date of his entry cannot be determined, the registers not going back so far. Among his many Latin poems is one addressed to his schoolmaster, “ornatissimo viro praeceptori suo colendissimo, magistro Brook,” included in the book of Greek and Latin poetry written “dum Aulae Pemb. alumnus fuit, et Collegii Petrensis socius.” He was elected a scholar of Pembroke Hall, Cambridge, in July, 1631, graduating in 1634, and transferring in 1636 to Peterhouse, thus making, as Dean Beeching notes, the opposite journey to that which was made by Gray in the following century. In a volume of divine epigrams in Latin published that year is perhaps the most famous Latin line written by an English poet, on the miracle of the water turned into wine, the pentameter,

Nympha pudica Deum vidit et erubuit,

which has attracted many translators, the majority of them basing their versions on a misprint of “lympha” for “nympha.”

Crashaw became a Fellow of Peterhouse in 1637, the year in which the brilliant young Abraham Cowley, whose friendship with the elder poet was to be immortal, came up to Trinity. Another

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friend was Joseph Beaumont, author of *Psyche*, also at Peterhouse. The unknown editor of Crashaw's *Steps to the Temple* declares that the latter was "excellent" in Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Italian, Spanish (in the two last of which he had no instructor), and skilled, as well as in poetry, in "Music, Drawing, Limning, Graving." He became a regular visitor to Little Gidding, in the neighbouring shire of Huntingdon, where Nicholas Ferrar had founded a religious settlement devoted to divine meditation ; where, he declares, in words which have kinship with the famous passage in the *Ode on the Intimations of Immortality*,

The self-rememb'ring soul sweetly recovers
Her kindred with the stars.

At this time he was still a Laudian within the Church of England. There is no reason to suppose that he would have left it but for the overthrow of the High Church party. In 1644 came that *débâcle* ; Laud was beheaded, and on Cambridge came, like a wolf on the fold, the Earl of Manchester to administer the Solemn League and Covenant. Crashaw refused to subscribe, and was one of sixty or seventy Fellows expelled. He went to the royal headquarters at Oxford, of which University he was already a member. It was probably here that he became a Roman Catholic. We next discover him in poverty and distress in Paris, where, as the story goes, he was presented to Queen Henrietta Maria by Cowley. There also his *Steps to the Temple* was published. The Queen sent him with letters of introduction to Rome,

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where he became secretary to Cardinal Palotta, the Governor. Another Fellow of Peterhouse, John Bargrave, relates that he complained to his master of the wickedness of his suite. This brought him into so great danger that the Cardinal had him appointed to a benefice at the Church of Our Lady of Loretto, which enshrined the Holy House, said to have been carried by angels from Nazareth to deliver it from the impious hands of the Saracens. There he died of a fever shortly after his arrival. Dr. Grosart has discovered that a new appointment was made on August 25, 1649, four months later. Cowley writes in his famous elegy :

Where, like some holy sacrifice t'expire,
A fever burns thee, and love lights the fire,

evidently not crediting the story that he was poisoned by the Italians whose wickedness he had exposed to Cardinal Palotta. No more fitting end can be imagined for this creature all flame and passion than a passing at such a site. The incident is one of the great romances of literary history, and has a worthy commemoration in Cowley's splendid ode.

In dealing with the metaphysical poets we find ourselves constantly referred to two names. Whether our study be Carew, Suckling, Lovelace, Quarles, Cowley or Marvell, we are always repeating these names: those of John Donne and Ben Jonson. These two poets dominate all their age and for good and ill mark it as their own. Crashaw, most "metaphysical" of them all, appears to owe rather less than these others to Donne and less still to

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Ben. Some of those strangely earthly metaphors for sacred things which he employs may indeed come from Donne, but much of his inspiration is foreign—Spanish and Italian. Two of the sources are revealed by himself in his hymns to Saint Teresa, the Spanish mystic, and in *Sospetto d'Herode*, a translation of the first canto of an epic by Cavaliere Marini, an Italian poet whose death occurred in Crashaw's childhood. It is from these sources that come his religious ardour, wherein the divine mingles so strangely with the half-animal, and also that ultra-refinement of "wit," that wealth of extravagant metaphor, which Mr. Gosse calls "fantastic foppery." There is no doubt that he derived from the Spaniards that symbolism of sexual passion which, from the *Song of Solomon* to certain poems of Coventry Patmore, is so disquieting to the devout. With the Spaniards, indeed, it sometimes appears to us to degenerate into deliberate sensuality. This we tolerate in King Solomon, who, when he wrote,

Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb ; honey and milk are under thy tongue ; and the smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon,

wrote clearly as an earthly lover, even if employing earthly love as an image. It is startling in the mouths of monks and nuns. In those of Crashaw and Patmore it is often scarce less surprising.

Crashaw's conceits are not more bewildering, but are more highly coloured than those of Donne. A tear from the eye of the Virgin becomes in one poem a "moist spark," a "watery diamond," a

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“star about to drop,” a pearl “slipp’d from Aurora’s dewy breast.” Yet nothing could be more unjust to Crashaw or destructive of his charm than to pick out these purple spots from the web of his verse and exhibit them singly. These poets, and Crashaw above all, fascinate not in spite but because of their glitter and flamboyancy. Their “wit” is a part of their work, a pattern, a flavour, a perfume, which, whether it appeals to us or not, cannot be subtracted without the ruin of the whole. It is a quality easy enough to recognize, but extraordinarily subtle and elusive when the moment comes to define it. It may seem at first sight absurd to declare that it is in part the product of a conviction that the visible world exists, when we have just been insisting upon this poet’s preoccupation with the mystic side of life. Yet it is a fact that this poet and all the rest are in a sense materialists. Material things about them are ever to them very real. They live in an age very interested in science, and they exhibit their own interest by their metaphors. Says Marvell, excusing Cromwell for overthrowing the existing order :

Nature, that hateth emptiness,
Allows of penetration less,
And therefore must make room
When greater spirits come.

John Hall thus expresses his Epicurean philosophy :

Since that this thing we call the world
By chance on atoms is begot.

Cowley summons chemistry to punish his cruel mistress :

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Wo to her stubborn heart if once mine come
Into the self same room ;
'Twill tear and blow up all within,
Like a granado shot into a magazin.

And here is a stanza from *The Weeper*, by Crashaw, which Mr. Gosse declares " has driven away from it [his shrine] many a would-be worshipper " :

Not the soft gold which
Steals from the amber-weeping tree,
Makes Sorrow half so rich
As the drops distill'd from thee.
Sorrow's best jewels lie in these
Caskets, of which Heaven keeps the keys.

Of those who are driven away by this, one might well demand what they went out for to seek. Not, surely, an Elizabethan, with wood-notes wild, nor an Augustan, with polished *mediocritas*, nor a Victorian romantic, with great accomplishment and subtle music. No, they expected to find a " Fantastic," the most fantastical, perhaps, of them all. They must take him as he is. There will be times when he will strain his note, just as there are times when these others strain their notes. Above all, they must not believe that it is *naïveté* which leads these metaphysicals to their excesses. On the contrary, it is sophistication. And here, perhaps, we come to the heart of the matter. It is impossible to define poetical " wit " in one word ; but if the task were imposed, what better could be found than this—sophistication ? There is in the poetical art no standing still. Each generation of poets must find a new mode of expression. He who

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deliberately repeats the mode of the old is cramping his own art, which is in part the product of his environment. Cowley was a disciple of Spenser, but he wrote like Spenser only while a precocious child. The metaphysical poets must take their own road. Their signpost is "wit." They are too "fine," in the best meaning of the term, too particular to ape the simplicity of their predecessors. The heroic days are gone. These men, but for the greatest of them, Milton, who is assuredly of their company, are lesser men. Ah, yes, but that they have something the others lacked in this quality, something that has lacked since them. They have their "wit."

The most famous of Crashaw's religious poems is *A Hymn to the Name and Honour of the Admirable Saint Teresa*. It is interesting because it contains instances of all Crashaw's qualities without the exaggeration of those qualities displayed in *The Weeper* and other poems. It has rapture and fire, it has all that high-coloured imagery that Crashaw borrowed from its subject. Its theme is unfolded in the opening words :

Love, thou art absolute, sole lord
Of life and death !

It tells how Teresa, "yet a child, outran maturity, and durst plot a martyrdom," and how she was reserved for another life and death.

Farewell then, all the world, adieu !
Teresa is no more for you.
Farewell all pleasures, sports, and joys,
Never till now esteemed toys !

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Farewell whatever dear may be,
Mother's arms or father's knee !
Farewell house, and farewell home !
She's for the Moors and martyrdom.

Sweet, not so fast ; lo ! thy fair spouse,
Whom thou seek'st with so swift vows,
Calls thee back, and bids thee come
T' embrace a milder martyrdom.

Thou art Love's victim, and must die
A death more mystical and high ;
Into Love's arms thou shalt let fall
A still surviving funeral
His is the dart must make the death,
Whose stroke will taste thy hallow'd breath ;
A dart thrice dipp'd in that rich flame
Which writes thy spouse's radiant name
Upon the roof of heaven, where aye
It shines, and, with a sovereign ray,
Beats bright upon the burning faces
Of souls which in that name's sweet graces
Find everlasting smiles.

So splendid is the passion—so lyrical, so intense—in this poem that we are never cloyed by the extravagance of the metaphors, nor notice, till we come to examine the verses carefully, a fact such as that the word “sweet” occurs six times in less than fifty lines. But Crashaw is more uneven than almost any poet save Coleridge. *An Apology for the foregoing Hymn* is lead to the gold of this. Here also, indeed, are a few fine “fopperies,” but for the most part the poem is dull with the dulness of Habington. He returns yet again to his favourite saint in *The Flaming Heart*, and yet again is at his worst, though his own true disciples, as fierce a

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clan as those of Wordsworth and Browning, will not admit it. To make amends, in a final passage added at a later date he gives us perhaps his highest flight. Nothing even in the *Hymn* is so splendid as this :

O thou undaunted daughter of desires !
By all thy dower of lights and fires ;
By all the eagle in thee, all the dove ;
By all thy lives and deaths of love ;
By thy large draughts of intellectual day,
And by thy thirsts of love more large than they ;
By all thy brim-filled bowls of fierce desire,
By thy last morning's draught of liquid fire ;
By the full kingdom of that final kiss
That seized thy parting soul, and seal'd thee His ;
By all the heav'ns thou hast in Him
(Fair sister of the seraphim !)
By all of Him we have in thee ;
Leave nothing of myself in me.
Let me so read thy life, that I
Unto all life of mine may die.

Of all poets Crashaw risks most from the hasty judgment of minds which do not alone move outside the channels of his, but are unable to comprehend the course of those channels. If a man sing of the loss of Paradise, of a lock cut from a beauty's head, of a skylark climbing the heavens, of the pictures upon an antique urn, or of a great murder trial in seventeenth-century Italy, all men can readily sympathize with him. But a Catholic mystic, steeped in the traditional imagery and concepts of foreign Catholic mystics, is further from the average Englishman's sympathies. If we would appreciate Crashaw, we must try to enter into his mind, to accept his conventions. To

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illustrate my meaning I cannot do better, than quote a stanza from the famous *Song (of Divine Love)*, which goes to an extreme that to some may appear repulsive :

Lord, when the sense of Thy sweet grace
Sends up my soul to seek Thy face,
Thy blessed eyes breed such desire,
I die in Love's delicious fire.
O Love, I am thy sacrifice !
Be still triumphant, blessed eyes !
Still shine on me, fair suns ! that I
Still may behold, though still I die.

Of the other most notable religious poems reference has been made to *The Weeper*, likewise a subject of contention between the initiate and the outside world. *Sospetto d'Herode* is Crashaw's most sustained effort. In eight-line stanzas, a triple rime with a concluding couplet, it never falters in its rhythmical fluency. This man was capable of an epic in his best moments, yet we must be grateful that he did not attempt one, for all the probabilities are that his worst would have had a part in it. Of dramatic and narrative instinct he had no more than flashes, whereof some appear in the hymn for the Nativity. In that for the Epiphany he takes one of the most beautiful subjects in religious history, and contrives to make the highly romantic figures of the three kings curiously dull. Indeed, it cannot be denied that there is a vein of dulness in him. He works on the perilous borderland between ideas that can be apprehended by the intellect and the vague country of the spirit. When he fails to reduce to earthly

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language his spiritual meaning, then the failure of the whole passage, or even of the whole poem, is complete. It is the risk that every mystic needs must run.

There is difference of opinion on the merits of Crashaw's sacred and profane verse. To my mind there can scarce be a comparison. The *Wishes to his (supposed) Mistress* is indeed as notable as anything in the other book, while *Music's Duel* and the *Song out of the Italian* are worthy of their place with the second best. That is all that can be said for *The Delights of the Muses*. Given Crashaw's temperament, his training at Little Gidding, his reading, can it be expected that it will be as a "poet of earth" that he will chiefly shine? No, these other poems are the mere diversions of a religious mystic. The *Wishes* has indeed become known, though in an arbitrarily shortened form from a bad text, to a very wide public from the *Golden Treasury*. It deserves its fame. The poet through over forty stanzas piles wish upon wish, image upon image, colour upon colour, till he invests the whole with a wonderful rainbow effect. There are some of the most charming conceits :

Till that divine
Idea take a shrine
Of crystal flesh, through which to shine.

And there is some noble philosophy :

Life that dares send
A challenge to his end,
And when it comes say, Welcome, friend !

And there is, one feels, a certain wistfulness ; as

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if the divine lover for a moment regretted that he were not an earthly lover, while setting himself to paint a glittering portrait of the ideal mistress that might have been his.

Strada's story of the contest between the lute-player and the nightingale has brought good fortune to English poets. The translation of it has given Crashaw one of the finest of his profane poems, his contemporary John Ford one of the most gravely beautiful and musical passages in his *Lover's Melancholy*, and a few generations later Ambrose Philips one of his best pastorals. Of the three versions Crashaw's is the most ambitious, the longest, and the fullest of varied splendours. Yet its very ambition, length, and diversity overweigh it and make it a too mighty mould for its slender subject. We cannot see that subject for its adornments. With all its flame and colour and intricacy and sweetness, it is less pleasing than Ford's gracious simplicity.

The *Song out of the Italian*, from an unknown original, has all the fantasy and the music, if not the charming originality, of the *Wishes*. Its metre has been copied by Swinburne in *A Song in Season*. It is one of the most daintily worldly of Crashaw's songs. There is in it a thistledown delicacy and grace which he does not always display :

In free air
Flow thy hair ;
That no more Summer's best dresses
Be beholden
For their golden
Locks to Phœbus' flaming tresses.

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O deliver
Love his quiver ;
From thy eyes he shoots his arrows ;
Where Apollo
Cannot follow ;
Feather'd with his mother's sparrows.

There are several other translations from Greek, Latin, and Italian of great charm. Indeed, it is significant that the only notable poem in *The Delights of the Muses* which is not a translation is the *Wishes*. It would seem that Crashaw's spirit, bent upon holy things, moving in an aura of incense and to the melody of divine music, needed the ideas of others to inspire him to worldly song.

Crashaw, after long neglect, has come to considerable popularity. He has, and probably always will have, two types of admirers. There are, first, the men of like mind, the religious mystics who burn with his flames. This is a small band, for whom their divine poet is the object of a cult. But in a far larger section of men of taste he arouses a more tempered and reasoned delight. These make for him no extravagant claims, and are content that he should be ranked in the second order of poets. They do not deny that his worst is leaden, nor that his best and worst are continually being mingled. But they assert that at his best he fulfils in a wonderful fashion the old conception of the poet as a holy and inspired seer, and that he has moments of pure radiancy which stand almost alone in our literature. In these golden glimpses, when he opens a shutter of the world and discovers to us the most sacred

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visions that man can conceive, there is but one poet to whom he can be compared. Coleridge has his ornament, Francis Thompson his passion, but neither the melodious perfection to which he then rises. At his greatest, when borne along by that lyric flood, he becomes for an instant Shelley's kinsman.

Andrew Marvell

ANDREW MARVELL marks the close of an era. Having produced him, Mother England, that had been of late so fecund of poets, fell barren or nigh barren for a while. In the thirty years that preceded his birth were born, to name but the greatest, Herrick, Herbert, Randolph, Waller, Milton, Suckling, Butler, Crashaw, Lovelace, and Cowley, of whom Waller and Butler alone outlived him. In the next thirty, nay in the next sixty, years there appears but one great poet, Dryden. There is not another the equal of Waller, least of the company of the elders.

The date and place of his birth were variously given till Dr. Grosart took the trouble to photograph the entry in the register at Winestead, with that of his three sisters and his brother John, who died in infancy. The date is the 31st of March 1621—"borne Martji ultimo being Easter-even," says the register. His father was rector of the parish. Three years later the elder Marvell obtained a living in Hull and was also appointed Master of the Grammar School. There his son had his early education. Parker, his enemy in

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later life, declared that as a boy he kept bad company, and is sarcastic about his bringing-up among cabin-boys. Indeed the Grammar School may have been rough, but that commonly does little harm to men of Marvell's type ; who was no drooping lily of a poet, but a sturdy fellow who all his life gave harder knocks than he got, as Parker was to find out. He went to Trinity College, Cambridge, at twelve years of age. Other poets in residence while he was up were Cleveland, Crashaw, Joseph Beaumont, and Abraham Cowley. The story goes that the very youthful undergraduate was abducted by Jesuits, then in the blast of missionary zeal, taken to London, and brought back by his father in 1638. Certainly the Jesuits cannot have done their work thoroughly, for Marvell was to live to be the greatest scourge of Rome of his day in England. He graduated in 1639.

Followed a long and leisurely Grand Tour, which embraced France, Holland, Italy and Spain. In its course he met Flecknoe, born, if ever man was, to be a butt, and wrote a hateful satire to mark the occasion—hateful because, however dull and stupid a man may be, his poverty and his hunger are unpleasant subjects for mockery. On his return he showed some sympathy with royalism by a blistering poem on the death of Thomas May, and by declaring his friendship for the prince of Cavalier poets, Richard Lovelace, then fallen on evil times.

In 1650 came the most important event of his life, from the point of view of posterity. He was

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appointed tutor to little Moll Fairfax, afterwards Duchess of Buckingham,¹ then aged twelve. Her father, the great Lord Fairfax, had just retired to his fine house, Nun Appleton, near York, handing over the supreme command of the Army to Cromwell when he could not prevent the expedition against the Scots. Fairfax was one of the noblest characters of his age. His lady, who had shouted from a gallery in Westminster Hall at the trial of the King, "Oliver Cromwell is a traitor!" had, Mr. Birrell opines, "something about her of the old campaigner," but she was a brave woman and probably a very interesting one. For his young charge Marvell appears to have had great affection. The two years passed at Nun Appleton were his golden age, his "happy garden-state." There was a fine park, fine trees, beautiful gardens. Marvell was a lover of nature, of birds and beasts and trees and flowers. But above all was he a lover of gardens, and his greatest claim to our affection is that he is the greatest of English garden-poets. At Nun Appleton House was written almost all the poetry whereon to-day his fame is founded.

After Elysium, bureaucracy and politics. Marvell met Milton, then Latin Secretary, in 1652, and was by him introduced to the regicide Bradshaw. In 1657 he became tutor to Charles Dutton, nephew of the Lord Protector, whom he had celebrated in his splendid *Horatian Ode*. In

¹ Cowley wrote their wedding ode, and was perhaps "best man" to that strange compound of genius and blackguardism, George Villiers.

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the same year he was appointed assistant to Milton. Cromwell died in 1658, and in the following January Marvell was elected M.P. for Kingston-upon-Hull in Richard Cromwell's Parliament, and re-elected in 1660 to the Convention Parliament, which brought about—with the very forcible aid of General Monk—the Restoration. A large number of his letters to his constituents have been preserved. They are exceedingly cautious in tone, not to say dull, and it is to be noted that they do not disclose to the electors of Hull which way their member voted. In 1663 he went as Secretary to Lord Carlisle, Ambassador to Muscovy, Sweden and Denmark. The most important object of the mission was the visit to Russia, to demand the reinstatement of British trade in its former privileges. The journey was very difficult, and the mission was treated with persistent discourtesy, and achieved little. All this time Marvell was still writing poetry, but of a very different order from that of the garden-state ; bitter, sometimes scurrilous, but always forcible and timely satire, directed against the vices of the Court, the advances of the Roman Catholic party, and the disgrace of the Dutch triumph in the Medway. He continued to represent Hull till his death, which occurred suddenly in 1678, and was always, it appears, on good terms with his constituents.

Marvell's lyrical poetry belongs to his youth, but on the principle of keeping the good wine till last we may leave it for a moment to consider his other work. His verse satire and his prose

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have each a certain importance, but he would be a very minor and uninteresting figure if they were all he had left. The Marvell of the lyrics and he of the satires are different poets, belonging to different ages. He cannot be said to bridge the ages, as do Waller and Cowley. His early work is definitely in one, his later in the other. In the former he is a genuine "Fantastic," true son of Dr. John Donne. The last of that strange Italian gilding that gives such subtle beauty to all the age of Elizabeth, James and the First Charles, is worn away when he quits country for town. The satires are Restoration in spirit. They do not stand the test of great satire, the test we apply to *Hudibras*; their interest does not outlive the events that gave them birth. They are written, it would appear, in a hurry, roughly finished. They were not published in his life-time. Indeed, though the good-nature of the King might have saved their author's neck, their publication would probably have cost him his nose, for the bravos of the Court were particular about that delicate plant, their master's honour.¹ The most famous is *The Last Instructions to a Painter about the Dutch Wars*, 1667. Marvell had sung the praises of Blake, and was furious at the shameful degeneracy of English naval power. The title was taken

¹ About this time a Member of Parliament who, in reply to a statement that play-actors were of great service to the King, demanded whether male or female players were meant, had his nose slit by young O'Brien, Lord Inchiquin's son, and other young bloods who assembled at the Duke of Monmouth's house. Marvell mentions the fact in a poem.

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from Waller's eulogy of the Duke of York's naval victory off Harwich.¹ Denham, whose wife had become the Duke's mistress, had been the first to turn the idea to satire. Marvell begins by whipping St. Albans, and then the Duchess of York, daughter of the man he hated worse than poison, the Chancellor Clarendon. His biographers have tumbled over themselves in their efforts to palliate these atrocious assaults—for there are many others—on this far from estimable lady. It is the privilege of biographers to eulogise their subjects and abuse their subjects' enemies, but nothing they can write alters the fact that Marvell's lines on poor "Nan Hyde" are venomous and disgusting. Follows a bitter attack on the House of Commons, and then at last the poem rises to a high order of merit. With a biting pen Marvell describes our unpreparedness, the sailing of De Ruyter up the Thames, the capture of our ships, the impotence of Monk ashore :

(As if, alas ! we ships, or Dutch had horse) ;

breaking out finally into a splendid rage :

Black day, accursed ! on thee let no man hail
Out of the port, or dare to hoist a sail,
Or row a boat in thy unlucky hour !
Thee, the year's monster, let thy dam devour,
And constant Time, to keep his course yet right,
Fill up thy space with a redoubled night.

¹ *Instructions to a Painter for the drawing of the Posture and Progress of His Majesty's Forces at Sea under the command of His Highness Royal.*

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'When agèd Thames was bound with fetters base,
And Medway chaste ravished before his face,
And their dear offspring murdered in their sight,
Thou and thy fellows saw the odious light.
Sad change, since first that happy pair was wed,
With all the rivers graced their nuptial bed :
And Father Neptune promised to resign
His empire old to their immortal line ;
Now with vain griefs their vainer hopes they rue,
Themselves dishonoured, and the gods untrue ;
And to each other, helpless couple, moan,
As the sad tortoise for the sea does groan ;
But mostly for their darling Charles complain,
And were it burned, yet less would be their pain.¹

The whole incident is humiliating enough, but of actual danger there was little. The Dutch dared not land, and in the peace that followed agreed to dip their flag on encountering our vessels.

Clarendon's Housewarming is an attack that falls flat. History has decided that Clarendon was a great and good man, and it needs more than such rimed abuse to shake the verdict. Perhaps the truest satire is contained in *An Historical Poem*. There is all the "snap" of Pope in these opening lines, and never was subtler caricature drawn of Charles the Second :

Of a tall stature, and of sable hue,
Much like the son of Kish, that lofty Jew,
Twelve years complete he suffered in exile,
And kept his father's asses all the while :

¹ The *Royal Charles* that had brought the King to England, was captured by the Dutch.

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At length, by wonderful impulse of fate,
The people call him home to help the state,
And, what is more, they send him money too,
And clothe him all from head to foot anew.
Nor did he such small favours then disdain,
Who in his thirtieth year began his reign :
In a slashed doublet then he came ashore
And dubbed poor Palmer's wife his royal whore ¹
Bishops, and deans, peers, pimps, and knights, he made,
Things highly fitting for a monarch's trade !

Our satirist looks back to the bold days of Harry
and Elizabeth :

This isle was well reformed, and gained renown,
Whilst the brave Tudors wore the imperial crown :
But since the royal race of Stuarts came,
It has recoiled to Popery and shame.

In *Britannia and Raleigh* he is again *laudator temporis acti*. Raleigh urges Britannia to rouse Charles from his sloth and lust, and bid him put away his evil councillors. She declares that she has done it time and time again, and that the case is hopeless. Boldest of all is the *Dialogue between two Horses*, that which carried the statue of Charles the First at Charing Cross and that which bore his son at Wool-church. They discuss the demerits of their masters with considerable freedom, till he of Wool-church finally declares that there is naught to choose between them :

One of the two tyrants must still be our case,
Under all who shall reign of the false Stuart's race.

¹ Barbara Palmer, afterwards Duchess of Cleveland.

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De Witt and Cromwell had each a brave soul,
I freely declare it, I am for old Noll ;
Though his government did a tyrant resemble,
He made England great, and her enemies tremble.

Natural as these sentiments are, they seem scarce compatible with the royalism that has been claimed for Marvell by Mr. Birrell and others. In truth he had probably few theories on the matter at first, but became definitely a republican at the end. There is a passage in *The Rehearsal Transposed* in which he condemns the Rebellion, with the epigram, full of the soundest wisdom, that "the cause was too good to have been fought for." He loved efficiency and good order ; "Old Noll," if he were a tyrant and a mighty spender, gave both.

This *Rehearsal Transposed* is the chief of Marvell's prose works. It is based on Buckingham's famous farce. It was written in reply to *A Discourse on Ecclesiastical Politie* by Samuel Parker, afterwards Bishop of Oxford, and laughed the churchman out of court. Parker had a bad cause, and argued it with great ability ; Marvell a good one, and deliberately, though doubtless justifiably, lowered it, as Burnet says, to "a burlesque strain, but with so peculiar and entertaining a conduct that from the King down to the tradesman his books were read with great pleasure." Parker argues in favour of religious conformity, while allowing private freedom of conscience. Marvell, in his plea for complete toleration, mocks at the "precipitate, brutish, and sanguinary councils

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of the clergy." It is not hard to see why King Charles preferred the latter. To do him justice, he was not by nature a persecutor, and he knew that his Romanist friends and relations would be well stewed in the juice prepared for the Non-conformists.

The only other prose work which has much interest for us is *An Account of the Growth of Popery and Arbitrary Government in England*. It was written in 1678, when the nation was heading toward what John Richard Green calls "the second Stuart-tyranny." The tract is a violent attack on those who were attempting to

change the lawful Government of England into an absolute Tyranny, and to convert the established Protestant religion into downright Popery; than both what, nothing can be more destructive or contrary to the interest and happiness, to the constitution and being of the King and Kingdom.

Marvell, with his keen eyes, foresaw the dangers of the French model state, then rising to its climacteric of power and glory. At the best it was contrary to our ideals. English kings were different from others, and "the meanest commoner of England is represented in Parliament." The ideas of Marvell in this pamphlet were to a great extent embodied in the policy of the great Lord Shaftesbury.

It is a delight to turn from these old controversies to the real Marvell, the great Marvell. In the pleasant seclusion of Nun Appleton House his poetical genius bloomed like the flowers about him. In type the poems are, as has been said,

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“fantastic,” but with scarce ever a trace of freakishness. Their great merit is their happy blend of strength and sweetness. At times the poet allows a sensuous, dreamy, feminine beauty to master him ; then suddenly strikes clear with an unexpected note of virility. The finest of the lyrics challenge comparison with *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*. They are doubtless less powerful, and the effort is less long sustained—for the longer among them are not the best—but they have passages of equal beauty, are equally vivid in imagination, and show an even more enthusiastic love of nature. This last characteristic is of the greatest importance in Marvell. His nature is, it is true, a cultivated nature, a nature of park-lands and gardens. One cannot imagine him echoing Wordsworth's ecstasy before mountain scenery. The time for that was not yet. But English park-lands and gardens are very beautiful. And Marvell looked upon them with the naked eye, not through any spectacles, classic or romantic. His love for the countryside is purer, less complicated by tradition, comes straighter from the heart, than that of Thomson, Shenstone, and the early nature-poets of the following century.

Marvell's work is full of “conceits.” But they are for the most part, as Palgrave says in the Notes to his *Golden Treasury*, “imaginative, and not, as with most of our seventeenth-century poets, intellectual only.” Occasionally, indeed, he goes as far as any of his time. When he writes in *Eyes and Tears* :

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So Magdalen in tears more wise
Dissolves those captivating eyes,
Whose liquid chains could flowing meet
To fetter her Redeemer's feet,
Not full sails hasting loaden home,
Not the chaste lady's pregnant womb,
Nor Cynthia teeming shows so fair
As two eyes swoln with weeping are
The sparkling glance that shoots desire,
Drenched in these waves, does lose its fire

we recall Crashaw on the same subject. And yet, somehow, even when he goes a-hunting with Marini, Marvell remains strangely English. *The Nymph complaining for the Death of her Fawn* has a conceit to every few lines, and every one of them is charming. It is only the seventeenth century that could have given us

⁸
* Had it lived long, it would have been
, Lilies without, roses within.

Very rarely indeed do we meet with those material images in which Donne and his pupils, from Carew to Cowley, take such delight. Neither as poet nor as politician was Marvell a man of extremes.

Marvell's most famous single achievement is not characteristic of the rest of his finest work. It is *An Horatian Ode on Cromwell's Return from Ireland*. That event took place in the early summer of 1650, so that it may be presumed the Ode was one of the poet's first works at Nun Appleton House. It merits its title. It is the nearest in form—even to the syntax—and in spirit to the patriotic odes of Horace of any poetry in our lan-

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guage ; far closer to Horace, indeed, than most translations of his work. It is also in some degree reminiscent of the trumpet-notes of Milton. Unlike the other lyric poems, it might have been written had neither Jonson nor Donne ever been born. Cromwell can scarce be said to be the hero of the poem. Charles is that. It is curious that in the eulogy there is no moral support for Oliver. He is represented as a very successful adventurer, perhaps a scourge of God. So an English contemporary might have written of Napoleon :

'Tis madness to resist or blame
The face of angry Heaven's flame ;
And if we would speak true,
Much to the man is due,
Who from his private gardens, where
He lived reserved and austere
(As if his highest plot
To plant the bergamot),
Could by industrious valour climb
To ruin the great work of Time,
And cast the kingdoms old,
Into another mould ;
Though Justice against Fate complain,
And plead the ancient rights in vain ;
(But those do hold or break,
As men are strong or weak),
Nature that hateth emptiness,
Allows of penetration less,
And therefore must make room
When greater spirits come.

This, surely, is the eulogy of a *condottiere*, "urging his active star" to his own personal glory. It is in strong contrast to the poem that Marvell

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wrote on the death of the Lord Protector, when he seems grief-stricken and awed by the man's greatness. The lines on the King's death and the bowing of "his comely head" are eternal, one of the treasures of our literature. It is interesting to compare these, again, with those in the *Dialogue between two Horses*, where the King is disparaged. When Marvell wrote the former he was, at least in theory, a royalist ; when he wrote the latter he had come to the conclusion that "the false Stuart's race" could never bring but ill to England. Two lines in the Ode, at least, tell less than the truth. Neither then nor since have the Irish confessed of Cromwell :

How good he is, how just,
And fit for highest trust.

The longest of the lyrical poems, *Upon Appleton House*, is not among the best. It is perhaps as much narrative as lyrical. It contains a tedious history of how the estate came into the hands of the Fairfaxes. But here and there in the latter part are instances of that keen observation of nature and of that passionate nature-worship in which Marvell is not only unique in his day but which he is the earliest English poet to evince. The lines that follow are a fair example of the first. They could in that age have been written by none but him :

Then as I careless on the bed
Of gelid strawberries do tread,
And through the hazels thick espy
The hatching throstle's shining eye,

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The heron, from the ash's top,
The oldest of its young lets drop,
As if it stork-like did pretend
That tribute to its Lord to send.
But most the hewel's wonders are,
Who here has the holtfelster's care ;
He walks still upright from the root,
Measuring the timber with his foot,
And all the way, to keep it clean,
Doth from the bark the wood-moths glean ;
He with his beak examines well
Which fit to stand and which to fell ;
The good he numbers up, and hacks
As if he marked them with his axe ;
But where he, tinkling with his beak,
Does find the hollow oak to speak,
That for his building he designs,
And through the tainted side he mines.

That line " the hatching throstle's shining eye " has a tenderness that seems to belong to a later period, and might have been culled from the work of a living poet, Mr. Ralph Hodgson. The latter characteristic, that of nature-worship, shines out in the following famous passage :

Bind me ye woodbines, in your twines ;
Curl me about, ye gadding vines ;
And oh, so close your circles lace,
That I may never leave this place !
But, lest your fetters prove too weak,
Ere I your silken bondage break,
Do you, O brambles, chain me too,
And, courteous briars, nail me through !
Here in the morning tie my chain,
Where the two woods have made a lane,
While, like a guard on either side,
The trees before their Lord divide.

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These lines illustrate singularly well my statement that Marvell looks upon nature without spectacles. It is hard to think of any other poet before the days of Wordsworth in such complete harmony and such close communion with nature. We can see the young poet—most unromantic in appearance according to conventional standards, with his “roundish-faced, cherry-cheeked” head and his “pretty strong-set” body—walking in the park and woods with his little pupil, giving a corner of his intelligence to her talk, and with the rest of it drinking in the beauty and peace of his surroundings.

Influences of Donne and some resemblances to Milton have been traced in Marvell's poetry. There is another poet of the generation previous to his whom in some of his moods he recalls—George Herbert. He was religious, but always and before all a sturdy Protestant of the Reformation. His mysticism is a Protestant mysticism. It is not fanciful to suppose that at certain moments, moments of revulsion from the world, he approached the point of view of that recluse, so colourless beside Crashaw, who yet remains the most typically English of devotional poets. *The Coronet* and *A Dialogue between the Soul and Body* are the examples of this side of his poetical genius. The latter is somewhat harsh and laboured, but the former has charming lines, and, despite its conceits, a heart-felt sense of devotion.

When for the thorns with which I long, too long,
With many a piercing wound,
My Saviour's head have crowned,

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I seek with garlands to redress that wrong ;
 Through every garden, every mead,
I gather flowers (my fruits are only flowers),
 Dismantling all the fragrant towers
That once adorned my shepherdess's head ;
And now, when I have summed up all my store,
 Thinking (so I myself deceive)
 So rich a chaplet thence to weave
As never yet the King of Glory wore,
 Alas ! I find the Serpent old,
 That, twining in his speckled breast,
 About the flowers disguised, does fold
 With wreaths of fame and interest.

The *Horatian Ode* shares with *Bermudas*, *The Nymph complaining for the Death of her Fawn*, *To His Coy Mistress*, *The Picture of Little T.C. in a Prospect of Flowers*, and *The Garden*, the chief fame and the chief merit of Marvell's poems. All except the third, apparently omitted in an access of prudery which is simply incomprehensible to us, are included in the *Golden Treasury*, and are perhaps as well known as any five lyrical poems by any one of our poets. It is, in fact, on this sextet above all that Marvell is adjudged a great poet, not in that narrow sense in which we declare Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, Keats and Shelley to be the great poets of England, but in the wider and more usual sense in which we speak of some five-and-twenty great English poets. The more closely we examine these poems and compare them with the product of other poets of that age and of the next hundred and fifty years, the more highly shall we value them. Their charm is not altogether a lively

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charm. Marvell cannot sing a song such as Lovelace and Davenant achieve in their happiest moments, still less such as Herrick and Carew trill out joyously time and time again. With the poets in question the art of pure singing dies, not to be reborn—and then as a more complicated, less inevitable art—till the days of Shelley and Byron. But, placid as it is, it is also limpid and extremely delicate. The poet conjures up every now and then visions of pure beauty that match those of Spenser. Some of these jewels are known to all, but they will bear quotation yet once again. In *Bermudas* occurs the beautiful passage :

He hangs in shades the orange bright,
Like golden lamps in a green night,
And does in the pomegranates close,
Jewels more rich than Ormus shows ;
He makes the figs our mouths to meet,
And throws the melons at our feet ;
But apples plants of such a price,
No tree could ever bear them twice.

There is extraordinary intensity in these lines. The “golden lamps in a green night” is the supreme mastery of words, and appears to bring the imagination of the painter to the aid of that of the poet. They can be matched by stanzas from *The Garden*. This is a translation of a Latin poem of Marvell's. The original has a fine Horatian flavour, but it is the greater softness of the English tongue which gives these stanzas their extraordinary fascination.

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What wondrous life is this I lead !
Ripe apples drop about my head ;
The luscious clusters of the vine
Upon my mouth do crush their wine ;
The nectarine and curious peach
Into my hands themselves do reach ;
Stumbling on melons, as I pass,
Insnared with flowers, I fall on grass.

Meanwhile the mind, from pleasure less,
Withdraws into its happiness ;
The mind, that ocean where each kind
Does straight its own resemblance find ;
Yet it creates, transcending these,
Far other worlds, and other seas,
Annihilating all that's made
To a green thought in a green shade.

Here at the fountain's sliding foot,
Or at some fruit-tree's mossy root,
Casting the body's vest aside,
My soul into the boughs does glide :
There, like a bird, it sits and sings,
Then whets and combs its silver wings,
And, till prepared for longer flight,
Waves in its plumes the various light.

Here is another expression, "a green thought in a green shade," that, though it might in a modern appear precious, is delightful in Marvell because it comes to him naturally and because it is so exquisitely in tune with the sentiments of the preceding lines. The third, fourth, fifth and sixth lines of the last stanza quoted are the poetry of pure enchantment. They represent one of those magic moments that no poet, however great, has very often, and that none but a great poet compasses

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ever. This is perhaps the most perfect of all Marvell's poems.

The Nymph and the Fawn is best described by the adjective, used in its best sense, pretty. It is intentionally so. The poem is put into the mouth of a very young girl, and is shot through with a child's delicate fancies. Probably it was written for Moll Fairfax, and with her picture in the poet's mind. So fascinating is it that we do not pause to inquire how the fawn's "foot" could be "more white and soft" than the hand of its mistress ! It takes all the poet's art to save this poem from too much sweetness, but that art succeeds by a refusal to force the note. The combined simplicity and colour of the phrases will be noted in these lines :

I have a garden of my own,
But so with roses overgrown,
And lilies, that you would it guess
To be a little wilderness ;
And all the spring-time of the year
It only lovèd to be there.
Among the beds of lilies I
Have sought it oft, where it should lie,
Yet could not, till itself would rise,
Find it, although before mine eyes ;
For in the flaxen lilies' shade
It like a bank of lilies laid.
Upon the roses it would feed,
Until its lips e'en seemed to bleed,
And then to me 'twould boldly trip,
And print those roses on my lip.

That is the feminine side of Marvell. How masculine he can be in his most lyrical moments

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is shown by these lines from *His Coy Mistress*, which it is pleasant to compare with those just quoted :

Now therefore, while the youthful hue
Sits on thy skin like morning dew,
And while thy willing soul transpires
At every pore with instant fires,
Now let us sport us while we may,
And now, like amorous birds of prey,
Rather at once our time devour,
Than languish in his slow-chapt power,
Let us roll all our strength and all
Our sweetness up into one ball,
And tear our pleasures with rough strife,
Thorough the iron gates of life ;
Thus, though we cannot make our Sun
Stand still, yet we will make him run.

Andrew Marvell is a man of contrasts. To all but a few students he is to-day the author of the delightful lyrical poems that I have been last considering. Yet to himself they were but an interlude in his life. He turned his back upon that "happy garden-state," threw himself into the world of politics and diplomacy and satire. It is as if Mr. Walter de la Mare were suddenly to become a Trafalgar Square orator, to go on political missions to China, and to write leading articles in the press against the Government. Doubtless he was inspired by a high sense of duty, but we can ill spare, for a few stinging attacks on a dynasty dead and gone, for a volume of dull letters to constituents and interminable speeches before his barbaric majesty the Tsar of Muscovy, the rightful successors to *The Garden* and *Bermudas*.

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He cut himself off from lyrical poetry by his own action almost as completely as Keats was cut off by premature death. He remains a great poet ; he might have had to be numbered with our greatest.

Blaise Pascal

THE Roman Church in France, at a time when the political power of the Huguenots had been broken and their moral power was on the decline, was agitated by a minor "reformist" movement within its own fold. The man who initiated it and endowed it with his name was a poor Flemish priest, Cornelius Jansen, or Jansenius as he Latinized himself in his writings, whom piety and learning carried to the bishopric of Ypres. It seems curious to us that labours so simple and humble as his should have aroused the storm that followed the appearance of his *Augustinus*, published just after his death in 1640. It had appeared to him a better thing to study the greatest of the Fathers than to rely, as all the religious thinkers of the time relied, upon later men's versions of his opinions. To that study he devoted his life, and it was embodied in the book published when he died. But the pure doctrine of Saint Augustine was very far from that preached by the Jesuits, then at the height of their power. It was uncomfortably near to Calvinism. Through their influence it was condemned by a Papal Bull, as containing propositions already beneath the ban of the

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Church. These propositions mean little or nothing to the average man to-day, but perhaps the key to the controversy lay in the first, that there are commandments which the just are not always able to obey, and that the grace which makes obedience possible is lacking in them.

The doctrines of Jansen were being spread by his former friend the Abbé de St. Cyran, who founded the Brotherhood of Port Royal, in the valley of Chevreuse, near the ancient Convent of Port Royal des Champs. But it was not in him they found their first public defender. This was the celebrated Anthoine Arnauld, whose sister La Mère Angélique, was Abbess of Port Royal. Far more frankly a controversialist than Jansen, Arnauld attacked the Jesuits, and they struck back with all their strength. The battle lasted for years. At last the Sorbonne were summoned, the jury packed with friars who could hardly read and write, and a condemnation secured. Arnauld fled into hiding. The Jesuits had won a victory greater than that against Jansen.

So far the fight is like a hundred other fights. It is, indeed, no more than a single action in an age-long struggle that has never had, can never have, a wholly decisive result. Are there virtuous springs within the human character which give power to choose good rather than evil, or must an outside divine power, called by Christians God's grace, be brought to aid before that choice can be made? It employed metaphysical terms almost meaningless to-day. It was not even fought by the men most stalwart on either side, but by men

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nearer the centre. Jansen and Arnauld might turn to Saint Augustine, but they were careful to keep away from Calvin. The Jesuits might quote Aristotle, but they did not go so far as he in the direction of free will. Neither side had any real logical rampart except these two walls, one behind each, at which they looked nervously over their shoulders, against which they were afraid to set their backs. The thunder of *that* artillery seems very far. Certainly up to this moment, from the literary point of view, the contest is without interest.

Suddenly it becomes of very great interest indeed. At the beginning of a half-century which was to see France's greatest literary glory, the age when Molière and Racine entered upon the heels of Corneille, the age of La Fontaine, of Bossuet, of La Rochefoucauld, of Mesdames de Sevigné and de Lafayette, of the sinister Retz, and the delightful Perrault, there appears a man who was to exercise an influence upon thought as great as any, and upon the fabric of French prose an influence unexampled. A new fighter enters this dull old battle-ground, with a weapon that for the purposes of such controversy has never been surpassed in fineness and precision. With him French literature becomes, as Walter Pater remarks, "what it has remained—a pattern of absolutely unencumbered expressiveness"; or, as Prévost-Paradol puts it, "venu dans un temps où notre langue allait toucher à sa perfection, il a contribué à la rendre parfaite." *Les Provinciales*, or letters written to a provincial by one of his friends, raise the conflict from the artistic standpoint to an event of the first

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importance. They caused during their appearance, coming out over a considerable period, letter by letter, an extraordinary sensation, and time has not dimmed their fame. And yet it is hard to resist the conviction that the years have encumbered it with no small dross of affectation. Outside *Les Provinciales* the controversy has no charm for one of us in ten thousand. Within the pages of the book it is the same controversy, though treated by a witty genius. How many of those who pay it homage with their lips give it that of their hearts? For my own part I will confess that, having frequently read one letter or two taken at random and enjoyed them, when I came of late to read the whole collection through in two evenings I found the task a heavy, almost a painful, one. This much at least is certain : to be honestly a lover of *Les Provinciales* one must either be interested in those old battles of Molinist and Jansenist, which sets one in a very small though doubtless excellent company, or one must take a keen pleasure in the mechanical—shall I call it?—side of the war, the skill of this disputant, his irony, his mastery of argument, above all his literary style, a wonder ; supple, exact, at once conversational and beautiful.

The writer of *Les Provinciales* was born this month three hundred years ago.¹ The family of Blaise Pascal was distinguished, and seems to have had right to a title of nobility which its members did not use. His father had been a judge at Clermont, and had come to Paris when the boy was about six years old ; giving up his post in order

¹ This article was first published in June, 1923.

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personally to superintend his education and that of his sisters. Each of these had talent and character. Gilberte, the elder, who married her cousin, a lawyer named Florin Périer, wrote the singularly vivid biography of her brother, which is the chief source of information regarding his extraordinary youth. Jacqueline was a poetess and a beauty, who seems to have attracted everyone who saw her. Richelieu admired her ; Corneille loved her company. There was some saintliness, some sign of unearthliness, about her while she was in the world, playing in it a brilliant rôle. She was to quit it for her inevitable destiny, Port Royal.

The little *Vie de Blaise Pascal* of Mme. Périer is a curious and often disquieting document. It explains to us more than she realizes, and sometimes, when she feels she is most edifying, arouses in us feelings of repulsion. But she succeeds admirably in picturing for us the childhood of her brother and its influence upon the man he was to be. The elder Pascal was learned ; he had also strong ideas about the principles of education. Latin and mathematics, in the latter of which he had few contemporary equals, he determined to withhold till the boy was twelve. Latin was to come first. So soon as he had learnt it he was to be introduced to the science, which he eagerly desired to learn. Then comes that story, incredible, one would say, on the face of it, but almost certainly true. The boy began in his play-room to work out the principles of geometry for himself.

Il prenoit du charbon [says his sister] et faisoit des figures sur des carreaux, cherchant des moyens de faire, par exemple, un cercle

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parfaitement rond, ou un triangle dont les côtés et les angles fussent égaux, et autres choses semblables. Il trouvoit tout cela lui seul ; ensuite il cherchoit les proportions des figures entre elles. Mais comme le soin de mon père avoit été si grand de lui cacher toutes ces choses, il n'en savoit pas même les noms. Il fut contraint de se faire lui-même des définitions ; il appeloit un cercle un rond, une ligne une barre, et ainsi des autres. Après ces définitions, il se fit des axiomes, et en fin il fit des démonstrations parfaites ; et comme l'on va de l'un à l'autre dans ces choses, il poussa les recherches si avant, qu'il en vint jusqu'à la trente deuxième proposition du premier livre d'Euclide.

At this interesting stage his father broke in upon him suddenly one day and caught him at work !

There was thereafter no more talk of holding him back. When he was sixteen he produced a little work on conic sections,¹ which seemed to those of his day so powerful, "qu'on disoit que depuis Archimède on n'avoit rien vu de cette force." Of his scientific work I can do no more than repeat what others have said. It is to be hoped that during the celebration of his tercentenary it will be discussed by some one competent to appraise it. He invented a calculating machine, which may have been scientifically perfect, but at any rate appears to have been beyond the craftsmen set to construct it. His most important work was the proof by experiment of the theories of the great Torricelli, pupil of the even greater Galileo, with regard to atmospheric pressure. He was then living at Rouen, where his father had a new post, aged twenty-three, and already so ruined in constitution that he was unable to go to Clermont for the ascent of the Puy de Dôme with the glass tubes containing

¹ *Pour les Coniques.*

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mercury with which the great experiment was made. This was carried out under his instructions by Périer and a number of others. The results were embodied in two works, *De l'Equilibre des Liqueurs* and *De la Pésanteur de la Masse d'Air*. By virtue of this experiment Pascal may be said to be the inventor of the barometer. He did other scientific work of the highest class, particularly in the realm of pure mathematics. And lastly, as we learn with astonishment and amusement, this invalid scientist and *dévot* invented, designed, and was a member of the private company which put upon the road—the first omnibus to ply for hire.

The rest of the account of Gilberte Périer is devoted chiefly to his terrible sufferings and his piety. He ailed from childhood, and increased his ill-health by his toils. After his eighteenth year, he declared, he never passed a day without pain. He was overcome with a partial paralysis, with terrible headaches, and more terrible convulsions, in the midst of which he died, in his fortieth year. He never made complaint. He bore all these evils with a patience copied from the example of Christ. He never, says Mme. Périer, owed ill-will to any man, even of those who had harmed him. He refused to take any pleasure in the delights of the world, even those apparently most innocent. A rich man, he sometimes had to borrow money for bare necessities, having previously given all he had to the poor, obeying thus the injunction to another rich young man. A saint, we say, and if to some of us certain of his asceticisms appear terrible, that does not cause us to qualify the verdict.

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Ah, yes, but there is another side to the medal, as often to such medals, whereon are strange hieroglyphics, gazing upon which we seem to pass from Christian sanctity to dark and dismal fetishism. There is the affair of Père de St. Ange, related by Gilberte, but with a certain economy of truth, which the researches of Victor Cousin have laid bare. We see a preacher, a monk, attracted by the intelligent conversation of three youths, inviting them, apparently, to his lodging, making some comments upon the mysteries of religion, which he is careful to point out he does not put forward as doctrine, the suggestions merely of an inquiring mind. One suggestion is that the bodies of the Virgin and of Christ were formed of some divine matter, and were different to human bodies. Another was nearer to the controversy in which Blaise Pascal was to be engaged : that a vigorous spirit can without faith reach knowledge of the mysteries of religion. We see them taking their leave with the usual politenesses, drawing up a report of the conversation, and forwarding it to the bishop. When the man has signed a statement retracting all the errors, and the bishop is satisfied, we see the youths writing this time to the Archbishop of Rouen to secure a stronger verdict. Eventually the zealots have to give up the heresy-hunt because the Church will ride with them no longer. And one of the youths is Blaise Pascal, who fought for justice for his friend Anthoine Arnauld.

There is another affair, which likewise we can put together from the materials collected by Cousin. There was a beautiful girl, sister of the close friend

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of Pascal, the Duc de Roannez. While her family was seeking her a suitable husband—she was still a child—Pascal was urging her to give herself to religion. For sixteen centuries, he writes to her, the Church has groaned for her ; it is time to groan for the Church and for us all, to give it all that remains of life. She runs away to Port Royal, crops her hair, takes (apparently private and personal) vows of chastity, dons the intermediate “petit habit.” Pascal dead, she returns to the world. She is absolved from her childish vows. A husband, a distinguished soldier, “duc et pair,” is found for her, she marries gladly. The story is taken up by Marguerite Périer, the niece whose cure by the Sacred Thorn caused the “second conversion” of Pascal. The girl is made to believe she has sinned against God. She falls into hopeless melancholy and sickness. One child dies an infant, another is born crippled. She herself dies, still very young. No personal obliquity on the part of Pascal in all this, it may be said. But do we not seem to be looking into an abyss, such as yawned before the vision of Pascal after a carriage accident, from which there rises a mephitic atmosphere of bigotry ?

That is the other side to the medal.

Surgit amari aliquid quod in ipsis floribus angat.

The miracle of the *Saint Epine* occurred when Pascal was in the midst of *Les Provinciales*. It may be partly responsible for the change of tone that takes place in their course. They are in the beginning the work of one who was then, if saintly

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in his life, yet a man of the fashionable world, interested in theological discussion like many another, from the Great Condé downward. The method of Pascal was very cleverly chosen. He speaks not as a Jansenist, which he undoubtedly was, but as an earnest seeker after truth. He represents himself as going to one of the Sorbonne doctors leading the attack upon Arnauld, and asking him if he does not condemn the Jansenist opinion "that grace is efficacious and that it determines our will to do well." Oh, no, that is no heresy. Then what is the heresy of M. Arnauld? It is, according to the doctor, that he does not admit that the just have the power to accomplish the commandments of God, in the manner wherein the Sorbonne understands the words.

Off he goes and seeks an imaginary Jansenist, "et pourtant fort bon homme," as he wickedly adds. Is it possible, he asks, that the Sorbonne can introduce an error such as "that all the just have always the power to accomplish the commandments"? Error? That is a perfectly Catholic sentiment. Back he goes, delighted, to the doctor with the news. Ah, yes, but did the Jansenist say the power was "immediate"—*un pouvoir prochain*? That is the point. The word is to him new and meaningless. Lest he shall forget it he hurries back to the Jansenist and asks if he believes in the immediate power. In what sense, asks the Jansenist, and avers that his two sets of opponents, Jesuits and Jacobins,¹ use it with different meanings.

¹ The Dominicans were known as Jacobins from their association with the Rue St. Jacques.

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He then visits in turn a leading Jesuit and a leading Jacobin. The Jesuit declares that it means that which lacks nothing for action. So, if a man is in darkness, he has not the immediate power to see. But no, says the Jacobin, a man in darkness who is not blind still has the immediate power to see. Thus, when the Jacobin declares that all the just have the immediate power to accomplish the commandments, he means they still want something more. What? Efficacious grace. Then his thought is precisely that of the Jansenists, whom he opposes, and opposed to that of the Jesuits, his allies. But Jacobin and Jesuit agree to fight Jansenist with "immediate power." With scorching irony Pascal drives his victory home.

It is the same with "sufficient grace." The Jesuits say it is given to all and all have power to render it efficacious or inefficacious without further aid from God. The Jansenists say that no grace can be sufficient which is not also efficacious. The Jacobins, for policy's sake, agree there is a sufficient grace, will suffer martyrdom for it, but add that man does not act upon this alone, and that God gives him efficacious grace. So grace is sufficient without sufficing.

Then he leaves that controversy to turn to direct attack upon the Jesuit doctrines. From their own mouths, from the writings of their brethren, he culls terrible fruits : that we do no sin if we do not feel in committing sin that it is forbidden by God ; that the "probable opinion" of a single learned doctor is an adequate guide for conscience, and that between two "probable opinions" a man may

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choose which suits him the better ; that a man may kill another to recover or preserve from robbery the sum of seven écus, but not less ; that unchastity is permitted if due merely to the desire to win a reputation for gallantry ; that, while we should give of our superfluity to help the poor, that which we keep to raise ourselves in the world is not a superfluity, so the great and the kings have rarely any superfluity at all.

The tone grows graver, anger rises, the early witticisms are absent, as he explores these teachings and defends Port Royal. One can scarcely say he is fair to the Jesuits, but at least he goes to the heart of the problem they present. They are not, he admits, corrupt. But they are greedy of power. They desire to rule the world, and so they have an easy doctrine for everyone, so they admit open evil-livers to the Sacrament.

Voilà ce que c'est, mes pères, d'avoir des jésuites par toute la terre. Voilà la pratique universelle que vous y avez introduite et que vous y voulez maintenir. Il n'importe que les tables de Jésus-Christ soient remplies d'abominations, pourvu que vos églises soient pleines de monde. Rendez donc ceux qui s'y opposent hérétiques sur le Saint Sacrement : il le faut, à quelque prix que ce soit. Mais comment le pourrez-vous faire après tant de témoignages invincibles qu'ils ont donné de leur foi ?

But quotation from this brilliant, and at the last impassioned, attack upon the great order is almost worthless. One must read pages, a whole letter, to appreciate the command of simple language, the precision, and the extraordinary charm, that makes of this question, so utterly forgotten and remote, one of the classics of French literature. And, to

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repeat an earlier warning, it is useless for most people to embark upon it at all unless they love for its own sake the mechanism, the texture, of argument beautifully arranged and expressed.

Les Provinciales met with the fate that might have been expected. They were formally condemned by the Inquisition of Rome, which nine years later condemned equally the maxims which they attacked. A Latin translation by Nicole was ordered to be burnt by the executioner in France.

For long they were regarded as the greatest literary work of Pascal. It was due to the discoveries and the enthusiasm of Victor Cousin, over eighty years ago, that they were dethroned in favour of the *Pensées*. He pointed out that these scattered reflections, as they were then known to the world, had suffered an almost incredible amount of "editing" after his death by the Duc de Roannez and his friends of Port Royal. Pascal had died in the odour of sanctity. The Jesuits might consider him a heretic ; he was never so regarded, despite the condemnation of the work of his youth, by the Church at large. He was never called upon to abjure that work, and he told his friends, in his last year of life, in the presence of Marguerite Périer, that he did not repent of having written it, and that if he were to write it then he would express himself even more strongly. But Port Royal was naturally desirous that his posthumous "thoughts" should appear as a perfect model of piety. From its thousands of alterations they were freed by the edition of Prosper Faugère, who followed in the steps of Cousin, going direct to those manuscripts

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in Pascal's brilliant, tortured handwriting, pages of which the latter has reproduced.

The *Pensées* form one of the greatest of books of divine meditation. They are not so much the work of a great thinker as of a man intensely in earnest, with wonderful felicity of self-expression, so that the finest reflections of his ardent spirit seem to be inscribed, in the fewest words and most perfect form possible, with a diamond upon glass. Of all the great literatures the French is richest in a mode in which ours is weak, the collection of maxims, of wisdom, worldly or spiritual, embodied in sparkling aphorisms. On the worldly side, indeed, Pascal was by no means silent. He had been a man of fashion, the intimate of the Duc de Roannez, of the Marquise de Sablé, another writer of maxims, and the mistress of a famous *Salon*. I have never found in his writings or letters any reference to his great contemporary, the Duc de la Rochefoucauld, but it is probable that he knew him. His sister Gilberte hints that many of his friends were among the *Frondeurs*, and says that his religious sentiments would not allow him to oppose the royal power. To La Rochefoucauld in wordly moments he sometimes certainly seems to approach.

N'avez-vous jamais vu des gens qui, pour se plaindre du peu d'état que vous faites d'eux, vous étalent l'exemple de gens de condition qui les estiment ? Je leur répondrais à cela : Montrez-moi le mérite par où vous avez charmé ces personnes, et je vous estimerai de même

L'exemple de la chasteté d'Alexandre n'a pas tant fait de continents que celui de son ivrognerie a fait d'intempérants.

Le nez de Cléopâtre, s'il eût été plus court, toute la face de la terre aurait changé.

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Les hommes sont si nécessairement fous, que ce seroit être fou par un autre tour de folie que de ne pas être fou.

The wit here touches the cynical. Sometimes there emerges a political truth, such as this phrase, in which we to-day see the whole history of the late war, with the very words which began it :

Ce chien est à moi, disoient ces pauvres enfants ; c'est là ma place au soleil : voilà le commencement et l'image de l'usurpation de toute la terre.

My place in the sun ! Of *that* maxim at least we have learnt the truth.

But neither worldly wit nor political wisdom sound the true note of the *Pensées*. That note is the voice of the moralist seeking truth in communion with his God. No longer is he the brilliant young fighter of the earlier *Provinciales*. Earnest and austere, every possible distraction eliminated, he sets out upon the search for eternal verities, well knowing that he is never to find all he seeks, for " God being hidden, every religion which does not say that God is hidden is not true." Our religion proclaims it. *Vere tu es Deus absconditus*. But we see at once that in truth no real change has come over him. The youth who was shocked by the Jesuit creed of easy worldliness, all things to all men, of " cheap " piety, is the same as the sick man who raises himself to a peak, an arid, stony peak, we may feel, but a great height, and looks upon the world. The weakness and misery of man appal him, and the more because he is convinced of man's essential greatness and dignity. Never have these

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been more magnificently affirmed than in the most famous of his sayings, and the noblest.

L'homme n'est qu'un roseau, le plus foible de la nature, mais c'est un roseau pensant. Il ne faut pas que l'univers entier s'arme pour l'écraser. Une vapeur, une goutte d'eau, suffit pour le tuer. Mais quand l'univers l'écraseroit, l'homme seroit encore plus noble que ce qui le tue, parce qu'il sait qu'il meurt ; et l'avantage que l'univers a sur lui, l'univers n'en sait rien.

Toute notre dignité consiste donc en la pensée. C'est de là qu'il faut nous relever, non de l'espace et de la durée que nous ne saurions remplir. Travaillons donc à bien penser : voilà le principe de la morale.

Those who see in Blaise Pascal only a fanatic scourging his own kind should turn to this and other like sayings in the chapter upon the grandeur of man. But not for this does he cease to be a pessimist, or to cry, Woe ! Woe ! Wickedness afflicts him with something like terror. He despairs for mankind. In his despair of its hearkening to higher motives he descends to the most curious argument ever used to bring man to God. Is there truth in the doctrines of Christianity ? If you had to wager on the question, which opinion would you back ? You have to wager, by your life. If there is truth, what do you gain ? All. And lose ? Nothing, but your stake, a life of earthly pleasure. But perhaps I wager too much. No, since there is equal chance of loss or gain, if you were offered only two lives for one you might back either opinion. If you were offered three lives you would be prudent to back truth, hazarding one life of earthly pleasure for three of heavenly, at a game where there is equal chance of loss or gain. But,

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actually, there is an infinity of happiness if you win, in an equal chance. And the whole thing is worked out by the greatest authority of his time upon the laws of chance.

Strange mixture of scientist, mystic, and salvationist ! His own philosophy, expressed best of all in his conversation with de Saci upon Montaigne and Epictetus, is a blend of the opinions of these two conflicting philosophers, the "pyrrhonism," as he calls it, of the one, the stoic dogmatism of the other. They are reconciled, brought together, by the message of God. We must speculate, but our speculations must start from evidence, as Walter Pater happily puts it, "supplemented by an act of imagination, or by the grace of faith, shall we say ?" He belongs to a race that is very rare upon this earth—fortunately, some may say, but who can tell ? Few at least will deny that it is well the race exists. Seldom can we love him, though we are led nearer to affection for him by the comparatively recent discovery, in itself, perhaps, no more than a hint, that he was once in love, at Clermont, with a young and learned beauty, "qui était la Sapho du pays." We should like at least to believe the story is true of the writer of that "discours sur les passions de l'amour" generally bound with the *Pensées*. But never can we withhold our admiration, nor, even if he repels, a sort of awe. Like an army that withdraws from a wide position to hold a narrower, he gathers redoubled strength from the concentration of his resources, till he stands upon his rock invincible. And he shows us how to do it, revealing himself in that revelation. We may not

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desire to follow his method, but it is worth reflection. Of him it was particularly true that it needed not the universe should arm to crush him, but that when the universe had crushed him he remained nobler—and stronger—than that which had killed him.

William Congreve

HAD the greatest critics always power to make men love and admire that which they loved and admired, then Congreve were assuredly one of his country's favourites. For advocates he has Dryden, writing in a vein as high to adoration as a veteran of genius ever used regarding a youth ; he has Hazlitt, fiery in his enthusiasm ; he has the gentler Lamb, not quite sure, indeed, that he approves, but owning himself completely captivated. After these it would scarce seem that he needed Leigh Hunt or his other champions. Yet in fact Congreve is not one of his country's favourites. He is, on the contrary, about the worst-used, in proportion to his merits, of any of her writers. His wit is allowed, but not widely relished. He is often called our first master of pure comedy, but practically never seen upon our stage. "I had rather," wrote Hazlitt, "have seen Mrs. Abington's Millamant than any Rosalind that ever appeared on the stage." We may not agree, but we have all seen Rosalind and—but for a handful who have witnessed special performances by societies—Millamant alas ! never.¹ Some of the causes of Con-

¹ Since this was written we have had the delight of seeing Milla-

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greve's comparative unpopularity may be accidental. His character has been hardly treated by many writers, but it is not in any case such as to arouse enthusiasm. The fire of Jeremy Collier's batteries may have done little real damage to the fortress of his art, but it has left a sulphurous atmosphere about his name. That unlucky word to Voltaire, repeated by every one who writes about him, that he desired to be regarded merely as "a gentleman who lived a life of plainness and simplicity," has been used against him, though many another of his craft has had the same innocent weakness. Lastly, we are a sentimental nation. If he had left ten thousand pounds to Mrs. Bracegirdle and two hundred to the Duchess of Marlborough, instead of reversing the process, critics would have blotted their pages with tears and a rose-hued legend would have grown about him.

These are personal matters, which should not count, but do count nevertheless. They are at least a handicap in that struggle to raise their heads above the multitude of their rivals in which all writers of the past have to engage. Congreve has other handicaps, laid upon him by his methods of work. But the chief handicap is due not to himself but to his age and its conception of the drama. It is often said that the plays of the dramatists of that age are not acted because of their

mant played by an actress, of whom I should say that she was born for the *rôle*, did it not appear that she was born to play well any *rôle*. Mr. Playfair's production confirms with regard to *The Way of the World* the opinion expressed at the end of this paper. I feel convinced that the same would be true of *Love for Love*.

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indecenty. That argument might serve where Wycherley is concerned, but with Congreve it will not do, for he is never grossly indecent and rarely indecent at all. Moreover, his heroes, whatever their pasts, set themselves to the winning of their mistresses in passably honourable fashion, and their goal is marriage. Araminta, Cynthia, Angelica, may be minxes, but they are no worse. He has no central figure such as Horner in *The Country Wife*, who really is rather more than most modern stomachs can stand. In *The Way of the World* there is one sentence only, that spoken by Witwoud when the coachman orders chocolate and cinnamon-water for Petulant's friends in their carriage, that would have to be cut if the piece were played to an ordinary public to-day. No, the true reason for Congreve's exclusion is that he follows a tradition that has never taken permanent root here, that is un-English. He wrote classical comedies as he wrote a classical tragedy, and neither one model nor the other is ours. We have seen Molière played in English by English actors, but it is doubtful if any member of the audience who had not some knowledge of the French theatre and its tradition really appreciated the performance. And Molière has twice the vitality of Congreve. The hard Gallic brilliancy of that type of comedy is not enjoyed by Englishmen in the mass. Sheridan, a far more popular dramatist than Congreve, may perhaps be said to belong to the school and to have found favour, but he is the exception. Wilde is not an exception, for *The Importance of Being Earnest* is almost pure farce. Certainly

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Mr. Shaw is not, though he has employed the formula. He may bluster to conceal the fact, but we know very well he has a heart. Besides, his path is bordered by notice-boards bearing each a moral. The distinction between wit and humour is never easily made, but it is fairly clear that Congreve's strength is in the former and that of British comedy in general in the latter. With all its brutality, *The Provoked Wife* is nearer to our usage than anything of Congreve's, and he was incapable of the robust jollity that envelops its best scenes, such as that between Lady Fancyful and Mademoiselle, when the latter hurries the former out to a rendezvous.

And so Congreve has become the dramatist rather of the library than of the stage, and even in that respect has not been handsomely served. That reproach at least is to-day removed by the beautiful limited edition of the Nonesuch Press, which well fulfils the expectations aroused by previous publications. It contains all his work, including *Squire Trelooby*, translated from *Monsieur de Pourceaugnac*, of the exclusion of which by other editors perhaps rather too much is made, since the play traditionally stands under the name of Vanbrugh and the extent of Congreve's participation in it is uncertain. It contains also a long introduction by Mr. Montague Summers, learned and highly controversial. Mr. Summers ranges from Tertullian, "Clement of Alexandria, Minucius Felix, Novatian, S. Cyprian, Arnobius, Lactantius, Firmicus Maternus, S. Ambrose, Orosius, and a score beside," to Mr. Shaw. Jeremy Collier, as

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was inevitable, receives severe handling, while Macaulay, his supporter, is polished off as "pedant and prig." But that is all part of Mr. Summers's crusade, and we can forgive much for the cause and the triumph achieved.

We must, then, if we would fully appreciate the flowers of this brilliant foreign tree upon our soil, strive to reach an understanding of its nature. We must make an effort to set ourselves in the dramatist's place and to view comedy rather through his eyes than through our own. The task is not easy. If we go for guidance to the two great men who have praised him, we find that they arrived at entirely different conceptions of his aims and his methods. Each experienced rather more need for an apology than we feel nowadays. But their apologies are based upon opposite inferences. Hazlitt declares in effect that Congreve and the others are great satirists, lashing the follies and vices of their age as they depict them. Lamb, on the other hand, believes that they depict a world which is a pure convention. In a famous passage he protests that the moralist cannot be called in to give judgment upon work which is in its nature divorced from life.

The Fainalls and the Mirabells, the Dorimants and the Lady Touchwoods, in their own sphere, do not offend any moral sense; in fact, they do not appeal to it at all. They seem engaged in their proper element. They break through no laws, or conscientious restraints. They know of none. They have got out of Christendom into the land—what shall I call it?—of cuckoldry—the Utopia of gallantry, where pleasure is duty and the manners perfect freedom. It is altogether a speculative scene of things, which has no

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reference whatever to the world that is. . . . No purity of the marriage bed is stained, for none is supposed to have a being. No deep affections are disquieted, no holy wedlock bands are snapped asunder, for affection's depth and wedded faith are not the growth of that soil.

At first sight the two theories seem irreconcilable, yet in the case of Congreve at least it is by no means impossible to reconcile them. With Wycherley and Vanbrugh we feel that Hazlitt has more nearly the right of it ; though in the case of Wycherley—a rake of the rakes—we suspect a leaning toward rakishness for its own sake. But Congreve represents more completely than the rest that “artificial comedy” which Lamb attributed to all the age. He is of his time, up to date in his allusions to Will's Coffee-house, the Piazza, Rosamond's Pond, and Steenkirk cravats ; yet he does move in an artificial world of his own. When for a moment he quits fantasy to touch realism, in the odious character Maskwell of *The Double-Dealer*, we feel he has made an artistic mistake. For in that world villains are out of place. Profligates there may be, for profligacy is all the game, but they must be taken lightly and easily. The author feels no moral reprobation where they are concerned, and his readers may be content to take them as he presents them. But Maskwell is hateful even according to the conventions of the school. Congreve means him to be hateful, while Wycherley is probably unaware that there is anything objectionable in Horner. The second may appear to us the more loathsome, but the first is farther out of place. As for the wonderfully drawn Sir John

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Brute, of *The Provoked Wife*, a scoundrel as great as Maskwell, though in another fashion, he is a creature in a comparatively realistic comedy, and passes easily where our sense of fitness raises a barrier against the other.

Congreve, in fact, is at his best when most strictly bound by his convention. Even Hazlitt appears to incline to the opinion of Lamb when he declares that *Mirabell* and *Millamant* seem "as if they moved in air." That is, indeed, their proper world, and his. His characters are brilliant creatures, whose feet never quite touch earth. His clowns and servants are wittier than other men's wits; the talk of his wits is an unending flicker of summer lightning. These amazing puppets may sometimes speak the words of life, but, if so, they bedeck them till they are unrecognizable. And, if they speak the words, they do not think the thoughts. They have neither ancestry nor descendants, neither past history nor existence to come. Evanescent, ephemeral as the insects that dance in a sunbeam on a summer's afternoon, they are born of his brain for the duration of five acts, and die as soon as the curtain falls upon the last. There is still the epilogue, of course, but it is not *Angelica* or *Millamant* who speaks it. It is the beautiful, charmingly impudent *Bracegirdle*, the idol of the Town, the toast of the wits, the dearest friend of the gallant author. The characters have played their little part, and are gone.

These our actors,
As I foretold you, were all spirits, and
Are melted into air, into thin air.

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But while they lived and danced they had for setting no cloud-capped towers, no gorgeous palaces. They were backed by Hyde Park, or Covent Garden, the gallery of Lord Touchwood's home, or a room in a chocolate-house. They trip it, indeed, in middle air, but they come from below, not from above ; they are no heaven-descended sylphides, but the exhalations of very earthy earth. When they have disappeared we hardly remember what they were, though we cannot choose but recall with delight much that they said. Even while they are before us we cannot take them very seriously. The plots which detail their intrigues are so much machinery, at once carelessly and over-elaborately constructed. In these comedies, certainly in all but *The Way of the World*, our pleasure is not derived from character or action, but from the wittiest dialogue in the history of the English stage. The motives of the personages are naught ; their expression of them all. Such is Congreve's method : the presentation of a rout of fantastic creatures, using the language of the real world, but using it with a brilliancy that the real world never heard ; moving against the background of the real world, but moving in a fantastic manner that neither does nor could belong to it.

That such was his aim appears even more certain if we examine carefully the sequence of his plays and discover where his principles were leading him. To what point they would finally have led him we can scarcely conjecture. He was not thirty when he wrote *The Way of the World*, and, that being ill received, he wrote no more for the

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stage. But that is his masterpiece, and, despite its title, the farthest removed from the world of them all. All his work, with the exception of *The Mourning Bride*, is marked by progress. After each play he takes a bound forward. Had he written seven comedies, and had the seventh been as far ahead of *The Way of the World* as that was of *The Old Bachelor*, he were with Molière. He made an end just when his early-budded genius was in full bloom. In *The Old Bachelor* he launches out, not yet possessed of all his powers, nor having them completely under control. Strangely enough, perhaps to prove that the taste of the time had begun to change before the publication of Collier's "Short View of the Profaneness and Immorality of the English Stage," this play of his youth is the least reputable from the moral point of view of them all. Bellmour may be, as the list of persons announces, "in love with Belinda," but this does not prevent him intriguing with Lætitia, while the "capricious in his love" which is set against Vainlove is by no means an exaggerated description. But what do we care for Silvia, Vainlove's deserted mistress, or for Fondlewife, Lætitia's wronged husband? Not a jot. All that concerns us is the fact that in one scene, in a few words exchanged, the characters of the uxorious dotard and—its almost inevitable accompaniment—the flighty wife are drawn with a whimsical, shameless grace that once read can never be forgotten. It is, however, no compliment to a play to say of it, as must be said of this, that its secondary characters are those which hold the highest place.

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The progress shown by *The Double-Dealer*, despite our objection to Maskwell, and in some degree to Lady Touchwood, is great. The dialogue is as witty as that of its predecessor, but the plot is more closely knit. Lord and Lady Froth, the elegant Mr. Brisk, with his *bel-air*, delight us without hampering the action ; and the heroine, Cynthia, has more charm and personality than Araminta. Congreve is feeling his way toward matchless Millamant. But the advance made in *Love for Love* is far greater still. Here is an extraordinary galaxy of contrasted characters : Scandal and Tattle, to balance one another ; the loutish sailor Ben, to balance the country girl Miss Prue, Hoyden's first cousin ; the overwhelmingly witty man-servant Jeremy, who had certainly learnt much when he "waited upon a gentleman at Cambridge" ; Mrs. Foresight and Mrs. Frail, those disreputable sisters, now at war, now in unholy alliance ; above all, Foresight himself, a rich figure of comedy, with his superstitions and his white magic, his omens and his dreams. And this is the closest knit of all the plays, without a single character that is superfluous or a single scene thrown in so that the author may prove how irresistible is his wit and his knowledge of the Town and the mode. All through, as Meredith says, "he hits the mean of a fine style and a natural in dialogue."

MRS. FORESIGHT — You never were at the *World's-End* ?

MRS. FRAIL. — No.

MRS. FORE. — You deny it positively to my face ?

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MRS FRAIL.—Your face ! What's your face ?

MRS. FORE.—No matter for that, it's as good a face as yours.

MRS. FRAIL —Not by a dozen years' wearing —But I do deny it positively to your face then.

MRS FORE —I'll allow you now to find fault with my face ;—for I'll swear your impudence has put me out of countenance —but look you here now—where did you lose this gold bodkin ?—

O sister, sister !

MRS FRAIL —My bodkin ?

MRS. FORE —Nay, 'tis yours, look at it.

MRS. FRAIL.—Well, if you go to that, where did you find this bodkin ?—O sister, sister !—sister every way

MRS. FORE [*Aside*]—O devil on't, that I could not discover her without betraying myself !

MRS. FRAIL —I have heard gentlemen say, sister, that one should take great care, when one makes a thrust in fencing, not to lie open one's self.

MRS FORE —It's very true, sister ; well, since all's out and as you say, since we are both wounded, let us do what is often done in duels, take care of one another, and grow better friends than before.

It is pleasant here to mark how the elder of the sisters turns the fishwifely exchanges about the merits of their respective countenances to a pretty point of wit; while the sudden reconciliation of the two hussies, after the younger's mocking "O sister, sister !—sister every way" has caused the other's collapse, is exquisite.

For *The Mourning Bride* there must be a word, and we may well find one more generous than most writers during the past hundred years have been inclined to bestow. It is a good tragedy of the classical type, which type, if the comedies be classed in the language of bird-lore under the heading of "occasional visitors," certainly belongs

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to that of "rare visitors" to these shores. The plot is excellent, save for the absurd incident of the King taking Alphonso's place in the dungeon, where he meets his death. The blank verse obviously belongs to an age when that medium was becoming worn, but it has its fine moments. The speech of Almeria in the temple, which opens—

No, all is hushed, and still as death,

was, we remember, selected by Johnson as the most poetical passage in English poetry. We may be inclined to smile at the praise, but from the lips of a critic of the eighteenth century it is comprehensible. If in the best scenes *The Way of the World* ranks not far below Molière, the conception of and a few speeches from *The Mourning Bride* would do not undue discredit to Racine. There is a suppleness and sense of character in the portrait of Zara, her struggle between love and the desire for vengeance, that is not common in the classical tragedy. And beneath a mass of frigid pomposity there is the indication of passions burning fierce and hot.

So we work up to the climax, *The Way of the World*, for which, as it seems when we reach it, all the rest has been no more than a schooling. This is the ideal expression of his art. The plot may mark a retrogression to carelessness from that of *Love for Love*; that, it must be repeated, is not what matters. Condemn the convention, proclaim the faults; you have here in their despite something that is unique in English literature; you

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have a work in which the gallantries and follies, the worse than follies, the vices, the quips and the turns of the fashionable world, are refined by wit and the presence of an enchanting heroine to the delicate texture of the world of fairy. Here at last is the point to which he has been moving. He has arrived, and on arrival discovered Millamant, his fairy queen, *à la mode de* Peter Lely. She with her wand has touched the scenery, so that while it remains worldly it takes on an unearthly tinge and semblance. The underplot of vice and folly remains. There are Fainall and Mrs. Marwood for villainy, though villainy mild to that of Maskwell and Lady Touchwood. There is Lady Wishfort, a Millamant who has taken a wrong turning, grown wicked with age, her sprightliness turned to gall, ranting and raving with amazing eloquence. There are the boobies, the brothers Witwoud, and Petulant. But over vice and folly alike a gauzy curtain is hung, through which the villains appear no more formidable than naughty goblins, the old woman a comic and powerless witch, the boobies pigwidgeons cutting capers, and finding time to prove themselves *beaux esprits* of the first order. In the midst Mirabell and Millamant float, as Hazlitt says, in air : he the fop and young man of quality carried to such perfection that he wins grace for the demerits of all the tribe ; she the fine lady, high-hearted and quizzical, as she had not been painted in England since the day of Beatrice. Congreve has fewer friends than he deserves, but none who has met her has been able to resist the fascinations of this mocking queen of

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comedy. For those who do not succumb to her jests are taken in the snare of a tenderness that, well hidden as it is, cannot be denied. And fitly she is matched, for Mirabell misses the cruelty of the other men of fashion and becomes almost worthy of her. Hear them sharpening their wits upon each other in their contract with regard to marriage :

MRS. MIL.—D'ye hear, I won't be called names after I'm married ; positively I won't be called names

MIR.—Names !

MRS. MIL.—Ay, as wife, spouse, my dear, joy, jewel, love, sweet-heart, and the rest of that nauseous cant, in which men and their wives are so fulsomely familiar—I shall never bear that—good Mirabell, don't let us be familiar or fond, nor kiss before folks, like my Lady Fadler and Sir Francis . nor go to Hide-park together the first Sunday in a new chariot, to provoke eyes and whispers, and then never to be seen there together again ; as if we were proud of one another the first week and ashamed of one another ever after. Let us never visit together, nor go to a play together ; but let us be very strange and well bred : let us be as strange as if we had been married a great while ; and as well bred as if we were not married at all.

Then she presents her version of woman's rights : to pay and receive visits to and from whom she pleases ; to keep her correspondence sacred “ without interrogatories or wry faces on your part ” ; and her tea-table, “ which you must never presume to approach without first asking leave ” ; and many more. Mirabell, in turn, has a long list of propositions, which winds up with—

MIR.—Lastly, to the dominion of the tea-table I submit—but with proviso, that you exceed not in your province ; but restrain

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yourself to native and simple tea-table drinks, as tea, chocolate, and coffee : as likewise to genuine and authorized tea-table talk—such as mending of fashions, spoiling reputations, railing at absent friends, and so forth—but that on no account you encroach upon the men's prerogative, and presume to drink healths, or toast fellows ; for prevention of which I banish all foreign forces, all auxiliaries to the tea-table, as orange-brandy, all aniseed, cinnamon, citron, and Barbadoes waters. . . . These provisos admitted, in other things I may prove a tractable and complying husband.

MRS MIL.—O horrid provisos ; filthy strong-waters ! I toast fellows ' odious men ' I hate your odious provisos.

MIR.—Then we are agreed ! Shall I kiss your hand upon the contract ?

We feel that these two will do well together. With all their *badinage* they are seriously agreed upon the decencies of life. Millamant is of the world of fashion, but its follies and its tippling disgust her. And in the last scene, when the plot is smoothed out, Lady Wishfort's anger averted and her consent won, there is beneath the *badinage* a surprising revelation.

LADY WISH.—Well, Sir, take her, and with her all the joy I can give you.

MRS. MIL.—Why does not the man take me ? Would you have me give myself to you over again ?

MIR.—Ay, and over and over again. [*Kisses her hand.*] I would have you as often as possibly I can. Well, Heaven grant I love you not too well, that's all my fear.

For one moment Congreve has dropped the mask and allowed a trace of sentiment to appear. We like him all the better for it, and certainly we love his gay hero and heroine the more.

It has been said of Congreve that he is the

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dramatist rather of the library than of the stage. The statement is not true of his own time. All his plays, with the exception of the last and best, were then exceedingly popular. That does not necessarily imply that it is untrue to-day. There is much in his wit that is merely topical ; and though there is nothing so remote from us as the talk of some of Shakespeare's clowns, one cannot draw parallels in these matters between a genius of the first order and one of a lower. That his work is an admirable guide to the manners and speech of the *beau monde* in the latter half of the seventeenth century gives it added value and interest in the library without much increasing its dramatic appeal. Again, the looseness and carelessness of his plots, in contrast so strange to the high polish of his dialogue, is heavily against him. Above all, those who do not know the age have to surmount the barrier of a convention strange to them before they can appreciate him ; which barrier is more easily climbed from an arm-chair by the fireside than from a stall in the theatre. But, if he lacks dramatic continuity, his dramatic moments are thickly strewn, and bridged by gay laughter and keen observation. And if there be a convention to be mastered, it is one worth mastering by intelligent folk. It is hard to believe that even now he would not find an audience of persons with minds acute enough, and polite enough, and humorous enough to appreciate him and do him justice. This at least is certain : if that National Theatre, of which we have been talking so many years, ever comes to being, it will not be worthy

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of its title unless Congreve, particularly as represented by *Love for Love* and *The Way of the World*, be chosen as one of the chiefest pillars of its roof.

The Poetry of William Collins

THE Eighteenth Century is an age of prose. It is illumined by the lamp, small but very clear and white, of one great lyric poet ; a poet who deserves the epithet by reason of the perfection of his best work, though his limited range and indeed his limited output of pure poetry makes of him a minor figure beside the great poets of the century that had gone before or that which was to follow. With his compeer Gray, with whom, despite Swinburne's denunciation, he is rightly coupled, he introduced new form to English verse. And from him alone in all that age, amid some pleasant music of courtly lutes, of Thomson's "mellow horn," and of the golden harp of Gray, come the pure and clear notes of the pipes of Pan.

William Collins was born at Chichester in 1721, the son of a hatter. His short life had in it but one remarkable event, and that a horrible one. He went to Winchester in his twelfth year, and in 1740 became a Commoner at Queen's College, 96

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Oxford. He came to London in 1745, in the famous phrase of Dr. Johnson, "a literary adventurer, with many projects in his head, and very little money in his pockets," and spent much of his time, according to Gilbert White, "in all the dissipation of Ranelagh, Vauxhall, and the play-houses." A small legacy relieved him from the penury into which he had fallen, but the hopeless melancholy that had overcome him developed into definite insanity in 1753. In 1754 he was removed to a madhouse in Chelsea. Later in that year he was taken out by his sister, Mrs. Sempill, to his birthplace of Chichester, where he died in 1759.

It is interesting in considering the position of Collins to take a glance at his literary surroundings and the influences to which he was subjected. He moves on that stream of many sources which was flowing towards the great river of Romance and love of Nature, which bore along poets so widely different as Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Scott, Shelley, and Keats. We sometimes speak, indeed, as if the love of Nature in English poetry had its first expression in his *Ode to Evening*. Yet the greatest pastoral lyrics in the language are *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*; while in imaginative intensity and charm Marvell's *Garden* is not far behind. But imaginative intensity was soon choked by formalism. One might criticize Pope's *Windsor Forest* by a paraphrase of a famous criticism of another of his poems: "A very pretty poem, Mr. Pope, but you mustn't call it Nature." The reaction was slow. It began early in the century.

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One may even perhaps see traces of it in *The Chace* and *Hobbinol* of that good Warwickshire squire Somerville. It is very apparent in that self-conscious person Shenstone, author of *The Schoolmistress*. If we are disposed to think that the movement was slow and its originators timid, we must at least admit that they had a hard battle to fight. The following comments of Dr. Johnson, the supreme representative of the taste of the day, on Shenstone and his occupations, are instructive :

Whether [he wrote] to plant a walk in undulating curves, and to place a bench at every turn where there is an object to catch the view ; to make water run where it will be heard, and to stagnate where it will be seen ; to leave intervals where the eye will be pleased, and to thicken the plantation where there is something to be hidden—demands any great powers of mind, I will not inquire. . . . But it must at least be confessed, that to embellish the form of Nature is an innocent amusement.

A far from innocent amusement it seems to us to-day as it was practised by the Horace Walpoles and the Shenstones of the eighteenth century, though we pardon them much for the goodness of their intentions. But the sentiment is typical of the time. Nature, to be enjoyable, must be "embellished." Again, commenting on Shenstone's very pleasant *Pastoral Ballad*, Johnson declared :

An intelligent reader . . . sickens at the mention of the *crook*, the *pipe*, the *sheep*, and the *kids*, which it is not necessary to bring forward to notice, for the poet's art is selection, and he ought to show the beauties without the grossness of the country life.

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Surely this is formalism run to madness ! Why, even the painted shepherdesses of the Trianon were to carry crooks ! And one would have thought that the authority of classic poets of Greece and Rome would have permitted the mention of kids without incurring the accusation of "grossness." It was against such theories that war had to be waged.

Shenstone, to tell truth, fought in half-hearted fashion, as did he who is sometimes described as the first English nature-poet, James Thomson. Thomson's *Nature* is still seen through the eyes of classicism. That of a distinctly minor poet, Lord Lyttelton, is perhaps simpler, especially as it appears in his touching monody to the memory of his wife. But the men who took one of the longest steps, to whom an honourable place in English letters not alone in recognition of that step but of their direct influence on Collins will always be due, are the Wartons. Joseph, the elder, was at Winchester with Collins. His volume *The Enthusiast, or the Lover of Nature*—brave and significant title—contains the following lines :

Ye green-rob'd dryads, oft at dusky eve
By wandering shepherds seen, to forests brown,
To unfrequented meads, and pathless wilds,
Lead me from gardens deck'd with art's vain pomps.
Can gilt alcoves, can marble-mimic gods,
Parterres embroider'd, obelisks, and urns
Of high relief ; can the long, spreading lake,
Or vista lessening to the sight ; can Stow
With all her Attic fanes, such raptures raise
As the thrush-haunted copse, where lightly leaps
The fearful fawn the rustling leaves along ?

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The first three of these lines might have been written by Collins himself in maturity. The rest is perhaps not high poetry, except for the phrase "thrush-haunted copse," but it is a fine expression of the new spirit that was arising. Joseph Warton, followed by his brother Thomas, who wrote *Observations on the "Faery Queen" of Spenser* and took Milton as his model, struck a very doughty blow against "parterres embroider'd, obelisks and urns" and for the love of the "thrush-haunted copse" that was to culminate in Wordsworth.

Collins himself gave early proof of the spirit that was in him. He was yet a boy at Winchester, probably in his eighteenth year, when he began to write the *Persian Eclogues*. It is very typical of the first stirrings of Romance that its earliest devotees should be, in the words of a delightful modern poet,

Crazed with the spells of far Arabia.

The East stood for something distant, bright-hued, fantastical. Says the young Collins himself in his preface to the *Eclogues* :

The Stile . . . of an Arabian or Persian is rich and figurative.

There is an Elegancy and Wildness of Thought which recommends all their Compositions ; and our Genius's are as much too cold for the Entertainment of such Sentiments, as our Climate is for their Fruits and Spices.

But, alas ! Pegasus, which should have leaped high into the sunny realms of fancy, was still a decorously ambling steed. The *Persian Eclogues* are more notable for their aspiration than their

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performance. The new influence was at work, but its leaven had as yet little effect. The style, the sentiment, the *décor*, are still Augustan. Take these six lines from the First Eclogue, "Selim, or the Shepherd's Moral" (Scene, a valley near Bagdat) :

Thus Selim sung ; by sacred truth inspir'd ;
No praise the youth but her's alone desir'd :
Wise in himself, his meaning songs convey'd
Informing morals to the shepherd maid,
Or taught the swains that surest bliss to find,
What groves nor streams bestow, a virtuous mind.

And compare Shenstone :

'Twas youth's perplexing stage his doubts inspir'd,
When great Alcides to a grove retir'd
Through the lone windings of a devious glade,
Resign'd to thought, with lingering steps he stray'd ;
Blest with a mind to taste sincerer joys,
Arm'd with a heart each false one to despise.

Surely these voices are precisely similar. Collins need not have issued his warning that our geniuses were too cold for the entertainment of such sentiments. They had successfully entertained them for many a long day. This was still, in essence, the "classic" spirit, as understood by the imitators of Pope, far below that model, very far from that true classicism that Collins was to achieve in his Odes. The greater part of the fame that he was to know in his lifetime was won by these poems, and long afterwards Goldsmith was to speak of him as "the neglected author of the *Persian Eclogues*." To us to-day their chief interest is

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that which we take in the *juvenilia* of so many poets. We read them as a sailor wets his finger and holds it up to feel the direction of a scarce perceptible breeze.

The good things which were to come were not long delayed. It was in 1746 that was published a little volume, *Odes on Several Descriptive and Allegoric Subjects*, which contains all—except perhaps the *Ode on the Death of Thomson*—the poetry that gives Collins the right to be called a great poet. A slender offering, indeed ; twelve Odes, the shortest twelve lines in length, the longest less than a hundred and fifty ! Can such a harvest merit the title ? I think it does in this case. For there are here, firstly, a poem that most critics would set among the six most perfect short poems in our literature, the *Ode to Evening*, and secondly, one that has some claims to be considered *the* finest epitaph in the language, almost matchless in the real classic spirit of passion restrained, the flawless *Ode, Written in the beginning of the Year 1746, "How sleep the brave."* In the third place most lovers of Collins will probably put *The Passions, An Ode for Music*. Personally, I should set this above Gray's *Progress of Poesy* with which it at once challenges comparison. Collins has not that singular faculty for writing lines that are at once the pure gold of poetry and make universal appeal, to the dull as well as to the finely tempered, to the indifferent as well as to the seeker after beauty. This power is, of course, most apparent in the *Elegy*, one of our greatest popular poems. It appears even in *The Progress of Poesy*. None but

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lovers of poetry can recall a line of *The Passions*, but surely, even if "every schoolboy" may not know them, there can hardly be an educated man or woman who does not remember

Woods that wave o'er Delphi's steep

and

Nor second He, that rode sublime
Upon the seraph-wings of exstasy.

But Collins is not necessarily a lesser poet than his rival because he fails to touch every human heart or fire every human imagination ; nor is his Ode to be set below its delightful companion for the same reason. Inevitably there must be for poetry a higher tribunal than that of the crowd. I think that before this higher tribunal, which may be vaguely designated that of "people of taste," *The Passions* will take the prize. It is, shortly, the song of a greater lyrical poet, a greater singer. Whence comes this voice, speaking in these faery accents, from amidst the polished rotundity and varnished elegances of the day ? It is with something like amazement that our ears hearken to it. So perfect is its purity that for a moment we can scarce believe them.

But O how alter'd was its sprightlier tone !
When Cheerfulness, a nymph of healthiest hue,
Her bow across her shoulder flung,
Her buskins gem'd with morning dew,
Blew an inspiring air, that dale and thicket rung,
The hunter's call, to faun and dryad known !
The oak-crown'd sisters, and their chaste-ey'd queen,

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Satyrs and sylvan boys were seen
Peeping from forth their alleys green ;
Brown Exercise rejoic'd to hear,
And Sport leapt up, and seiz'd his beechen spear.

Nothing is there, indeed, in this little book that we would have left out, even if here and there appear infelicities due to Collins's transitional position and here and there a touch of coldness due to the fact that he had not always quite the strength or imagination to follow the path he had struck in *The Passions*. The *Ode to Simplicity* is as perfectly moulded in its smaller compass as Milton's Nativity Hymn, though it lacks the grandeur of the final couplet. The *Ode to Liberty*, the longest of them all, is, though still the note is muted, a heart-stirring paean. The *Ode on the Poetical Character* exhibits both his mastery of metre and his poetic philosophy at their best. Of all lost treasures in English poesy there are surely few that we regret more, that we can more ill spare, than that *Ode on the Music of the Grecian Theatre* mentioned by Collins in a letter to Dr. William Hayes. This was a subject suited to this poet as to scarce another. It may have been a complement to *The Passions*.

Of the scanty remnant left by Collins outside this volume the *Ode on the Death of Thomson* is the most important. It belongs to that collection, in our language less full and gracious than might be expected, the elegies of poets on poets. There is nothing in it that equals one flaming passage in Cowley's *Ode on Crashaw*. James Thomson could scarce call forth the ecstasy that Richard Crashaw's

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spirit imparted to his friend's. But it is deeply felt, and beautifully formed. Two or three stanzas are particularly memorable in their delicate melancholy.

Then maids and youths shall linger here,
And while its sounds at distance swell,
Shall sadly seem in pity's ear
To hear the woodland pilgrim's knell.

Remembrance oft shall haunt the shore
When Thames in summer wreaths is drest,
And oft suspend the dashing oar
To bid his gentle spirit rest.

And see, the fairy valleys fade,
Dun night has veil'd the solemn view !
Yet once again, dear parted shade,
Meek Nature's child, again adieu !

But when all is said, we return, if we love and admire Collins, to the *Ode to Evening*, that jewel. In it he shows his supreme mastery. The abandonment of rime gives added beauty and effectiveness to its classical structure, but only a king of rhythm and of language could have achieved such result in such form. There is no dross in this poem, no negligence, no wild flights, but the comely austerity of the perfect craftsman. He expresses more than he actually says, instead of that fatal something less that teases us in so many among our favourite poems. The opening is beautiful above all. The poem seems to steal upon the spirit as a swan steals into view upon waters at dusk.

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If ought of oaten stop, or pastoral song,
May hope, O pensive Eve, to soothe thine ear,
Like thy own brawling springs,
Thy springs, and dying gales ;

O nymph reserv'd, while now the bright-hair'd sun
Sits in yon western tent, whose cloudy skirts,
With brede ethereal wove,
O'erhang his wavy bed. . . .

It is curious to compare the estimation of Collins in his own day with that in which he is held in ours. I have quoted Goldsmith's description of him as "the neglected author of the *Persian Eclogues*." So Wordsworth might be described as "the famous author of the *Ecclesiastical Sonnets*." Dr. Johnson was his friend, yet his eulogy is chilly, and the Life seems more perfunctory than most. Yet, after all, perhaps, the verdict of that sturdy intellect is not illiberal if we consider the Doctor's own theories and prejudices. It compares very favourably with, let us say, that of the Reviewers on Keats.

His poems [he declares] are the production of a mind not deficient in fire nor unfurnished with knowledge either of books or life, but somewhat obstructed in its progress by deviation in quest of mistaken beauties,

and he admits that he was capable of reaching "in happier moments sublimity and splendour."

That was the opinion of the great critic of the day. We may take it that the views of lesser men were less favourable. The Wartons, indeed, were enthusiasts. All honour to them ! They stood to Collins as Leigh Hunt to Keats. Minor poets

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themselves, they had eyes to detect greatness where others did not.

Later critics have been much more positive than Johnson. Many have set him above Gray, which would have considerably astonished that poet. "I should conceive," wrote Hazlitt, "that Collins had a much greater poetical genius than Gray." To-day his fame is at its highest. Swinburne, in one of those happy flashes that illumine his criticism, like the ranking of our greatest poets into gods on the one hand and giants on the other, declared : "The Muse gave birth to Collins ; she did but give suck to Gray." And again he said of Gray : "As a lyric poet he is simply unworthy to sit at the feet of Collins," though he added, setting a problem that can never be solved :

Whether it may not be a greater thing than ever was done by the greater lyrist, to have written a poem of such high perfection and such universal appeal to the tenderest and the noblest depths of human feeling as Gray's *Elegy*, is of course another and a wholly irrelevant question

A question that it need not trouble us if we cannot answer ! We have room to love both, the elegiac, and the lyric poet, and we have the right to love either the better. My own preference is for the ecstasy of Collins to the humanism of Gray.

This year at least, the two-hundredth¹ since his coming into the world that treated him so ill, we should all dedicate to Collins. We bring now our votive-offerings to the shrine of the poet who so

¹ This essay was written to mark the second centenary of the birth of Collins.

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wonderfully weds English passion and rhapsody to Greek structure, to the greatest lyrist of a century, the purest voice between Milton and Keats, the one "winged and holy being" in an age which with all its remarkable poetic achievement yet remains, but for him, pre-eminently an age of prose.

Christopher Smart

(Born April 11, 1722)

His muse, bright angel of his verse,
Gives balm for all the thorns that pierce,
For all the pangs that rage ;
Blest light, still gaining on the gloom,
The more than Michal of his bloom,
The Abishag of his age.

WE can but hope that Smart's words on David were true of himself. Great was his need of such consolation. A more miserable and, but for one bright flower budded in madness, a more worthless and barren life than his, were hard to conceive. Even of his madness we have no picture of a fine spirit wasting away in melancholy, like that of his greater and like-circumstanced contemporary, William Collins. When Dr. Johnson, good, kindly soul, went to visit him in Bedlam, he returned to tell Boswell that he was growing fat. Boswell suggested it might be for lack of exercise ; but Johnson denied this, declaring that now he dug in the garden, whereas before, though he might walk as far as the ale-house, he was carried back. He added that he saw no reason for his

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confinement, since his maladies were not hurtful to society. He enumerated two : " He insisted on people praying with him ; and I'd as lief pray with Kit Smart as anyone else. Another charge was that he did not love clean linen ; and I have no passion for it." Johnson was probably right, but it is hard to see how confinement injured Smart, whilst it is at least to that confinement we owe his one marvellous poem, *A Song to David*.

Christopher Smart was born at Shipborne, on the northern edge of the Weald, then as now a pleasant land of woods and hopfields. Thence, in youth, he derived the impressions and the technical knowledge which he was to put into the poem—of all his work most popular in his own time—*The Hop-Garden*. His father, says his earliest biographer, was of a good North-country family. He was steward to Lord Barnard, managing the Kentish estates of that nobleman. It is related that Christopher Smart was prematurely born. He was certainly precocious in other respects. A poem, *Ethelinda*, is noted in his collected edition of 1791 as having been written at thirteen. Its poetic qualities, remarkable enough in a boy of that age, are far below those of many other *juvenilia* which could be cited, but there is about the piece a warmth of passion uncomfortable, whether artificial or not. During a holiday spent at Raby Castle he attracted the attention of the Duchess of Cleveland, who allowed him thenceforth a very small annuity. Under her patronage he entered Pembroke Hall, Cambridge, becoming a Fellow in 1745. Beyond, " farming " the Seatonian Prize Poem, which he

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won year after year, he appears not to have distinguished himself save by debts and dissipations. Then came Grub Street and magazine work ; and, what was better, the friendship of Johnson, Goldsmith, and Garrick. He had been confined for madness in 1751 ; twelve years later he was again in Bedlam. It was during this latter incarceration that he wrote *A Song to David*. His wife, meanwhile, since he could not support her, had gone to live with relatives in Dublin. Released once more, he settled down to his dreary work with new resolution. But he could not long keep his head above water. It was in the King's Bench Prison that he died in 1771.

The legend of *A Song to David* is that, being denied pens and paper, he inscribed the poem upon the panelled walls of his room with a key. The tale seems improbable, in view of the length of the Song. *A Song to David* was amazingly omitted from the edition of 1791 upon the ground that it contained too many "melancholy proofs of the estrangement of Smart's mind." Such, doubtless, would have been the considered verdict of the age, had the poem become sufficiently known to warrant one. To the critical intelligence of that day, starting with the knowledge that it had been written by a madman, or at least by a man in a mad-house, it must have appeared to bear the clearest signs of madness. Vastly has opinion veered since. Browning's admiration of it was little short of adoration. Rossetti called it "the only great *accomplished* poem of the last century." Mere folly this of a century which, though admit-

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tedly an age of prose, produced *The Rape of the Lock*, *The Passions*, *The Progress of Poesy* and the *Elegy*, *The Deserted Village*, all the poetry of Burns and Cowper. But it is typical of the first effect of bewildering loveliness which certain stanzas make upon the imaginative and romantic mind. There is something of mystery and enchantment, an immense attraction, hanging about its very name. It is the only work of Smart's of which more than the smallest fraction of the intelligent reading public has heard, till now. It may almost be said to have been both world-famous and unknown.

Spurred to endeavour, perhaps, by the recent bicentenary of Kit Smart's birth, two enthusiasts, one a well-known poet, have brought forth simultaneously, in England and Australia, new editions of *A Song to David*.¹ Each editor has included certain other poems; and it is no tribute to the quality of Smart's work, apart from the immortal Song, that in no case have they hit upon the same. Each has resisted what must have been a strong temptation, of the sort which assails the historian of a weak or unpleasant character, urging him to protest against the common verdict and prove his man stronger or more kindly than has hitherto been held. The temptation in this case was to assert that Smart's miscellaneous poetry had merits

¹ *A Song to David*: with other Poems. By Christopher Smart. Chosen, with Biographical and Critical Preface and Notes, by Edmund Blunden.

A Song to David: and other Poems. By Christopher Smart. With an Introduction and Notes by Percival Serle.

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undiscovered by previous critics. There is little attempt at literary whitewashing in either book. Mr. Blunden holds the theory that Smart's work improved after his confinement, and backs it by making his extracts exclusively from the *Psalms of David* (published in 1765), the *Hymns and Spiritual Songs* thereto appended, and miscellaneous poems from 1763 onward. From the historical point of view, Mr. Blunden is undoubtedly right in taking his selections from Smart's religious poems for the most part. In them there do indeed appear sudden flashes of felicity that recall the Song. These stanzas, from Psalm civ., might well be taken to belong to it :

He taught the silver moon her way,
Her monthly and nocturnal sway,
Where'er she wanes or glows ;
The glorious globe that gilds the skies
Is conscious of his early rise,
And his descent he knows.

The lines of light and shade to mark
Is thine, thou bidst the night be dark,
Beneath whose solemn gloom
The forest beasts forsake their den,
And all that shun the walks of men
Their wonted haunts resume.

But they would never be taken to be among the best. The truth is that the Song in its eight-and-sixty stanzas contains perhaps fifteen or twenty which are the language of pure enchantment, which attain a beauty difficult to define because so far above common experience. The wonderful

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effect of the poem is caused by the scattering of these magic beauties among a far greater number of beauties of a lower order and by the length and sustained lyrical quality of the whole. It is like a long rope of pearls, with some superlative in size and shape strung at intervals along it ; its beauty being to a great extent due to these and to its length. To find a single one of the smaller pearls only here and there, strung into the thread of Smart's other work, is indeed pleasant, but it does not give that work any real semblance to the Song. Mr. Blunden has discovered for us a considerable number of these pearls of secondary (though still high) quality amid the religious poems.

To us there is in its strange beauty and tenderness much unevenness, some obscurity—though no more than in many of the greatest of the world's poets—and not more than a hint of derangement. None the less is the poem the fruit of derangement. In what fashion this comes about can best be discovered by a glance at Smart's other work, wherein, if here and there appear evidences of talent, there is little or nothing that could conceivably be called genius.

Genius certainly we shall not find in his journalism, in all the skits, lampoons, and *facetiae* published for his stepfather Newbery in his magazine *The Midwife*, or in any of his pseudonymous effusions over such signatures as Mary Midnight, Ferdinando Foot, or Martinius Macularius. He can turn an epigram neatly and re-tell an old story well. But many men of genius have failed to display it in journalism, and it is to his poetry we

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must turn for the discovery of his true bent. Here, for example, are the opening lines of *The Hop-Garden* :

When to inhume the plants, to turn the glebe,
And wed the tendrils to th' aspiring poles,
Under what sign to pluck the crop, and how
To cure, and in capacious sacks infold,
I teach in verse Miltonian. Smile the muse

Smile ! If the lady has a sense of humour, which has never been effectively proved, she must have split her sides with laughter. Nor is there anything more "Miltonian" in that which follows than is to be found in these five lines. Yet they are not bad lines. *The Hop-Garden* is, in fact, a pleasant Georgic of a minor type, and perhaps the best of his productions saving the incomparable Song. Or take him in another vein, in *The Hilliad*, an attack upon the notorious John Hill, who had, in truth, used him very badly. *The Hilliad* is a satire, laboriously modelled upon *The Dunciad*. It is lively enough in parts, and just readable to the student of the period. Smart is, indeed, a typical minor poet of an uninteresting age. And it was not only that he could not write fine poetry ; he did not always know fine poetry when he saw it. When he set about writing an Ode for Saint Cecilia's Day, he felt that he ought to apologize, in view of the recent efforts in that direction of Dryden and Pope. Amidst his apologies he ventures upon some criticism. The quatrain beginning

Happy, happy, happy pair !

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he declares to be "so far from being adapted to the majesty of an Ode, that it would make no considerable figure in a ballad." Now in all the poem it is just that delightful, haunting cadence which reveals to us fully the brilliancy of one of the greatest masters that ever made music of our English tongue. Yes, Smart, sane, was kin of a Lovibond or an Aaron Hill, with a certain small talent, but conventional.

Conventional ! Is not that word the key to our mystery ? What was it that turned this secondary poet and journalist, who drank too much beer and could not pay his debts, into an inspired lyricist ? For the case is very rare. Many poets of little general merit have written a pretty short poem or two, but it is hard to find any who has produced one so splendid and so long as the *Song* whose other work is so far removed from it. We are tempted to follow Browning's theory that

all at once the ground
Gave way beneath his step, a certain smoke
Curled up and caught him, or perhaps down broke
A fireball wrapping flesh and spirit both
In conflagration.

Smart's poetical outlook was, as it were, filmed over by the conventions of his time. *A Song to David* is free of them. There is little external evidence to connect it with one literary period rather than another. It comes forth straight from the man's inner consciousness. His mental derangement did not mar it ; is it fanciful to suppose that it made it, that it wiped clean a slate

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whereon natural genius, urged by a vivid religious emotion, should write? The popular verdict, that the *Song* alone of all its author's work is great work, is perfectly correct. It appears equally true that in the *Song* alone we behold the real soul of the man himself—needs, weaknesses, sufferings swept aside. Nothing artificial, no bubble blown, as Palgrave seemed to think, in a "medley between inspiration and possession," is this, but a pure and undefiled outpouring of secret springs, tapped this once only, when the incrustations that clogged them were broken.

Whatever the seed, the flower remains, in its fashion, one of the finest we have to show. Mr. Blunden makes a strikingly sound criticism when he says that "the splendour seems Hebraic in origin." The poem is, in fact, a psalm. Smart made of his translation of the Psalms of David into English verse, as has been stated, a very fair success. The *Song to David*, on the other hand, was his own psalm, the astonishing pouring forth of his own spirit in prayer and praise. Coming from the depths of his own soul, it far surpasses the borrowed work. Yet it retains the very atmosphere of the Psalms, and it is that which makes his work so rare in our literature. If we turn to our other great religious poets, what do we find that they recall? George Herbert, the Anglican High Church of his day; Crashaw, the medieval Roman Catholic Church, with its saints and martyrs; Francis Thompson, the same Church seen through the eyes of a nineteenth-century mystic. But with Smart no Church is

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recalled. By him we are borne straight back to that Hebraic ecstasy which preceded the Christian faith and amidst which it was brought to birth.

He sendeth the springs into the rivers : which run among the hills

All beasts of the field drink thereof : and the wild asses quench their thirst

Beside them shall the fowls of the air have their habitation · and sing among the branches.

That is surely the very note of Smart's Song, and a note that we shall hardly find so exactly reproduced in all English poetry.

The verses chosen by Palgrave are justly famous. The first, in particular—

He sang of God—the mighty source
Of all things—the stupendous force
 On which all strength depends ;
From Whose right arm, beneath Whose eyes
All period, power, and enterprise
 Commences, reigns, and ends—

is splendid in its declamation. But they lack the subtler fascination of the “ Adoration ” stanzas, in some of which Smart is scarce more than half poet and all but half painter.

With vinous syrup cedars spout,
From rocks pure honey gushing out,
 For Adoration springs ;
All scenes of painting crowd the map
Of nature ; to the mermaid's pap
 The scaléd infant clings.

The spotted ounce and playsome cubs
Run rustling 'mong the flowering shrubs,
 And lizards feed the moss ;

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For Adoration beasts embark,
While waves upholding halcyon's ark
No longer roar and toss.

What pictures he conjures up here for the mind's eye! These stanzas would have their fitting complement in drawings by an Albrecht Durer. In the last eight words of the first-quoted Smart suggests his mystery, strangeness, romance, even his beauty of line. There are a dozen others which exhibit this keen and precise sense of the picturesque. Sometimes he crowds picture swift upon picture, picking out each with the few but flawless lines of a master-craftsman.

Beauteous the fleet before the gale,
Beauteous the multitudes in mail,
 Ranked arms and crested heads ;
Beauteous the garden's umbrage mild,
Walk, water, meditated wild,
 And all the bloomy beds

The second and third lines call to mind Walter Pater's description of Leonardo's fragmentary drawing for "The Battle of the Standard"—"a waving field of lovely armour, the chased edgings running like lines of sunlight from side to side."

The celebration of the centenaries of famous men is an act of piety. Such occasions, however, are apt to throw the soberest of us momentarily off our balance. Our man of the moment waxes huge before our eyes, while his contemporaries and rivals recede and dwindle. Let us then beware on this occasion of making claims too extravagant for poor Kit Smart. Only let us remember that,

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if we dub him a man of one poem, that poem is a long, sustained effort, and that it must set him in a category above, say, a Wolfe, whose reputation rests upon eight stanzas. For the rest, is it not enough for us, and for his memory, to acknowledge with thankfulness that out of misery and squalor came forth this one joyous and splendid ode, which will never lack appreciation from the finest minds and the appreciation of which may be called one of the tests of finely critical judgment ?

Four Hunting Classics

I. THE CHACE

“IT is impossible,” wrote Dr. Johnson of the poet Somerville, “to interest the common readers of verse in the dangers and pleasures of the chase.” The question is interesting to those who have recently read one of the most striking English poems published this century, which describes vividly “the dangers and pleasures of the chase” both to hunters and hunted, *Reynard the Fox*. It is nigh two hundred years since his poem on hunting brought William Somerville wide fame and popularity, that even now has not wholly faded. *The Chace* was one of the most famous poems of its day, the day of *The Seasons*. It was widely quoted, notably by Beckford, who also paraphrased certain passages in prose. Thousands have read of “the image of war without its guilt” who scarce know Somerville’s name, and thousands must have read the quotations in Mr. Jorrocks’s sporting lectures without knowing their source.

William Somerville has one advantage over Mr. Masfield. He was more than a poet of the chase ; he was Master—though doubtless he did not use

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the term—of foxhounds, harriers, and otterhounds. He superintended every detail of his kennel. He was a typical squire of his day, though with more learning and letters than most, a hearty fellow, popular with his neighbours, and fond—too fond, alas !—of good cheer. And late in life, when not far short of his sixtieth year, he wrote *The Chace*.

He came of an old Warwickshire family, that had owned Edstone Manor since the days of Edward IV. He was born in 1677, and educated at Winchester and New College. During school holidays he hunted foxes, hares, and otters, and drew badgers with four terriers which he kept. He left Oxford in 1704, and settled down to a country life, hunting hare and fox the winter through. One of his horses, Old Ball, is said to have carried him three days a week, but in those days, when foxes were disturbed ere they had digested their evening meal, hunting was generally more leisurely than it is to-day. He entertained lavishly and beyond his means, and another poet, Shenstone, says that pecuniary troubles drove him to drink in later years. However, he lived to the age of sixty-five, and followed hounds to the last. At a complimentary dinner given to him by two hundred hunting men the winter before his death “ he offered to bet fifty pounds that he would kill his hares, and pick them up, too, before any of the young bloods present could accomplish it (provided they would let him hunt the hounds), which was of course assented to ; and the veteran, to the discomfiture of many, won the fifty.”

Gilbert Forester, a regular contributor to the

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Sporting Magazine, has an interesting article on Somerville in February, 1832, from which some of this information is taken. He declares that his notes are "from the store-house of my friend Mr. Webb's memory, who, being bred and born a Warwickshire man, knows more of him than most people. His (Mr. Webb's) sporting education was conducted by the fostering care of the Bard's huntsman." It is stated that Somerville had twelve couple of beagles, bred chiefly between the small Cotswold harrier and the Southern hound; six couple of foxhounds, rather rough, and wire-haired; and five couple of otterhounds, which were in winter hunted with the foxhounds. At the beginning of his career he had no assistant but a boy of twelve named Hoitt, "whom he had taken into his service, and who afterwards attained the supreme honour of being huntsman, and lived with him to his death."

We are concerned now with *The Chace*, Somerville's chief claim to consideration, but before coming to it may spare a glance for his other works. The most important is *Hobbinol*, a curious mock-heroic poem dedicated to Hogarth. It is spirited enough, this burlesque epic of the bumpkin Hobbinol and his lady-love Ganderetta, he champion of the Vale of Evesham at wrestling and cudgel-play, she winner of the girls' race—after her gipsy rival had slipped and fallen in a puddle of cider! *Field Sports* is a supplement to *The Chace*, and deals with falconry, from the flying of eagles at stags to that of sparrow-hawks at partridges, and also with shooting and fishing. And here let it be recorded that

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Somerville shot on the wing, a new practice in England, first mentioned in Blome's *Gentleman's Recreation* of 1686, from which two prints showing this form of sport are reproduced in Mr. Baillie-Grohman's *Sport in Art*. Somerville wrote also a number of fables and tales, such as were fashionable at the moment, but poor stuff by comparison with a similar work of Gay. But we must to *The Chace*.

The Chace is a miniature epic in four books. Book I tells of the origins of hunting and its introduction into England, and then very sensibly going to the root of the matter, of the building of a kennel, the points of a hound, and the science of scent. Book II contains the famous description of a hare-hunt, after which it suddenly bursts into a grandiloquent account of the hunting of wild beasts by "the Great Mogul, and other Tartarian princes." Book III may be called the book of the fox, though here also there are glances at the hunting of wild animals in Asia and Africa. It concludes with a royal stag-hunt in Windsor Forest. Book IV treats of the breeding of hounds and their diseases, including rabies, and ends with a description of otter-hunting.

Somerville is very interesting in his picture of the ideal hound. His points are those sought after to-day.

His round cat-foot, straight hams, and widespread thighs,
And his low-dropping chest, confess his speed,
His strength, his wind, or on the steepy hill,
Or far-extended plain.

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One feels that were he alive to-day he would display the same distrust of the increasing size of Peterborough winners that Lord Willoughby de Broke, of the same shire, has lately expressed. He, like his successor, favours the medium hound.

But here a mean
Observe, nor the large hound prefer, of size
Gigantic; he in the thick-woven covert
Painfully tugs, or in the thorny brake
Torn and embarrass'd bleeds; but if too small,
The pigmy brood in every furrow swims,
Moi'd in the clogging clay, panting they lag
Behind inglorious; or else shivering creep
Benumb'd and faint beneath the shelt'ring thorn
For hounds of middle size, active and strong,
Will better answer all thy various ends,
And crown thy pleasing labours with success

With regard to breeding he is equally sound. He desires the best points, but he desires also that the sire shall have proved himself in the field. So, in Book IV, after an injunction to consider "what his fathers did of old," as well as his own "shape, sort, colour, size," he adds :—

Nor will sagacious huntsmen less regard
His inward habits; the vain babbler shun,
Ever loquacious ever in the wrong.
His foolish offspring shall offend thy ears
With false alarms, and loud impertinence.

He then goes on to deal with the bitch and her puppies, with walking :

The rustic dames
Shall at thy kennel wait, and in their laps
Receive thy growing hopes, with many a kiss

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Caress, and dignify their little charge
With some great title ;

and finally with the training of the young entry to shun riot, some of his methods being very severe.

The kennel, he tells us, should be built on a slight eminence, facing south-east, sheltered by planting "in equal ranks the spreading elm, or fragrant lime." He has a good idea of hygiene.

From the full cistern lead the ductile streams,
To wash thy court well-pav'd ; nor spare thy pains,
For much to health will cleanliness avail.

It would appear from Somerville's bet aforementioned, and from the enthusiasm of his description of the hare-hunt in Book II, as though this were his favourite sport. That dealing with it is certainly the finest passage in the poem. He tells of the early rising, of the excitement of the hunter as he is mounted, of the pack sweeping forth from the kennel, of the throw off, and the first note from a single hound, taken up by the whole "jostling tribe." He takes care that his hare shall not be chopped, and shall have a fair start, Then :

Here, huntsman, bring
(But without hurry) all they jolly hounds,
And calmly lay them in. How low they stoop,
And seem to plough the ground ; then all at once
With greedy nostrils snuff the fuming stream
That glads their flutt'ring hearts. As winds let loose
From the dark caverns of the blust'ring god,
They burst away, and sweep the dewy lawn
Hope gives them wings, while she's spurred on by fear.
The welkin rings ; men, dogs, hills, rocks, and woods,
In the full concert join. Now, my brave youths,
Stripp'd for the chace, give all your souls to joy !

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See how their coursers, than the mountain roe
More fleet, the verdant carpet skim . . .
They strain to lead the field, top the barr'd gate,
O'er the deep ditch exulting bound, and brush
The thorny-twining hedge.

For four or five pages the quarry is hunted, almost lost where sheep have fouled the line, but picked up again after a cast. Then comes the death, told in somewhat gory detail.

The fox-hunt in Book III is less vivid, but the run is sufficiently strenuous. One horse, completely ridden out, drops dead, while others reel along scarce able to bear their masters' weights. A chosen few alone are left in. After a check the tired fox is discovered by means of the birds circling about him, and hounds, apparently lifted, speedily run from scent to view, race after him into a village, and kill in a hen-roost ! Then all is joy. The farmer brings forth ale, his wife heaps the "liberal board," and the tired huntsman's toils are rewarded. There is at least one passage where Somerville rises from mediocrity and appears a true poet as well as a true huntsman. The happiness of the following picture and the image tagged to it will be acknowledged by all :

See my brave pack ! how to the head they press,
Jostling in close array, then more diffuse
Obliquely wheel, while from their op'ning mouths
The volleyed thunder breaks. So when the cranes
Their annual voyage steer, with wanton wing
Their figure oft they change, and their loud clang
From cloud to cloud rebounds.

So far I have made no claim for Somerville other

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than one to the kindly consideration of sportsmen. Has he a better title to fame? Is he worthy of the attention of "the common readers of verse"? I am inclined to think they might well spare him some.

He has a certain importance in English literature. With four famous friends of his, all remarkable poets of the second order—the first three, indeed, more important than himself—Allan Ramsay, James Thomson, William Shenstone, and his neighbour Lord Lyttelton, he takes his place in the van of the movement back to Nature. Indeed his love of Nature rings truer than that of Shenstone, who was as artificial and self-conscious in his pursuit of her as Somerville was free and unaffected. If he seldom rises to high poetry, his verse is at least smooth, well-rounded, pleasant to the ear. And, apart from his merits as a bygone mentor in sport, he is interesting because there appears in his work, beneath the "classic" dialect that he employs in common with his contemporaries, "an appetite, a feeling and a love," in Wordsworth's phrase, for the countryside. Surely there is that at least in these noble lines from the conclusion of Book IV :

O happy ! If ye knew your happy state,
Ye rangers of the fields ; whom Nature boon
Cheers with her smiles, and ev'ry element ¹

¹ A paraphrase from Virgil :

O fortunatos nimium, sua si bona norint,
Agricolas, quibus ipsa, procul discordibus armis,
Fundit humo facilem victum justissima tellus !

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Combines to bless . . .

Ye guardian pow'rs who make mankind your care,
Give me to know wise Nature's hidden depths,
Trace each mysterious cause, with judgment read
Th' expanded volume and submiss adore
That great creative will, who at a word
Spoke forth the wondrous scene.

And then our dear, jolly squire concludes with words that almost bring tears to our eyes if we be lovers of the things he loved :

And if, to crown my joys,
Ye grant me health, that, ruddy in my cheeks,
Blossoms in my life's decline ; fields, woods, and streams,
Each tow'ring hill, each humble vale below,
Shall hear my cheering voice, my hounds shall wake
The lazy morn, and glad the horizon round.

This was a man of proper spirit. I feel confident that for men of like tastes these last lines alone suffice to justify that assertion.

2. THOUGHTS ON HUNTING

Thoughts on Hunting has a unique position. It is definitely a technical manual of instruction. As such it has a value that, if not quite what it was when it was written nearly a hundred and fifty years ago, is still very high and universally acknowledged. There can hardly have been since its publication a hunting-man who read at all, and certainly not a master of fox-hounds, who has not studied it, as a painter studies Reynolds or a critic Coleridge. But it is far more than that. Your Thomas Smiths, your Colonel Cooks, are good men and true, who

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say what they have to say in sound countrified prose, but Beckford is a master of the art of writing as well as that of killing foxes. Adding to wit, to scholarship, to an incomparable knowledge of his subject, that subtle gift, which not all the treatises can explain, of setting words in happy order, this country squire produced a work which may truly be called a "classic"—perhaps the only book of its kind since the days of Walton that really deserves the title. Beckford, who could "bag a fox in Greek, find a hare in Latin, inspect his kennels in Italian, and direct the economy of his stables in excellent French," will quote for you Cicero, or Martial, or Montaigne, or the *Spectator*, but he does not stuff them down your throat. He does not wax lyrical over cleanliness in the kennels or the administration of physic. If he is the precursor of what may be called the *Pomponius Ego* school of sporting writers, that is his misfortune, not his fault. He is no popinjay bedecking his work with literary or foreign gewgaws. After travelling much and hunting wherever hunting there was, he declares stoutly that the sport "seems by Nature designed to be the amusement of a Briton," and reminds the friend to whom the letters that make up his book are addressed—

that when we were hunting together at Turin, the hounds having lost the stag, and the *piqueurs* (still more at fault than they) being ignorant which was to try, the King bid them ask *Milord Anglois* : nor is it to be wondered at, if an Englishman should be thought to understand the art of hunting, as the hounds which this country produces are universally allowed to be the best in the world.

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On the technical side, it must be admitted, he has his weaknesses, according to modern ideas. His methods of feeding, particularly in summer, would come under the ban of Lord Willoughby de Broke, who is scornful of the notion that hounds, just because they are not hunting, should be compelled to "swallow gallons of slush." But that is perhaps a matter whereon there may be two opinions. About bag-foxes there can be but one, and it is grievous to have to record that Beckford was a hunter of "bagmen." It is said that foxes were less plentiful then than now, so perhaps he could not otherwise have trained his young hounds. Even then there remains some monstrous doctrine about cats and badgers over which a veil must be drawn. On some other matters his advice is faulty only because times have changed and hounds have changed with them. The modern foxhound is almost undoubtedly faster than his predecessor, and can kill his fox without taking advantage of him while still sluggish after his night's meal. There is no need now of Beckford's early hours, nor of the wrath he expends on slow huntsmen. Where the modern huntsman more frequently errs is in being too much in a hurry. Then there were several types of hound. Now, as Mr. Richardson points out in his Introduction, except in Wales and on the Welsh border, there is in Great Britain one type of foxhound only.¹ Actually, Mr. Richardson uses the term "United Kingdom," but

¹ *Thoughts on Hunting*. By Peter Beckford. With an Introduction by Charles Richardson. 1923.

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if he means by that to include the Irish Free State he is not quite correct. There is in the West of Ireland a distinct type called the Old Irish Hound, a misshapen and ghostly looking beast with markings of the palest yellow upon the white, of which I have seen one or two specimens. Readers of the "Irish R.M." stories will remember the Whiteboys, whose "first achievement was to run the earth-stopper's dog, and having killed him, to eat him," having been, as Michael remarked, "rared very pettish." It is notable, however, that though the prints of the time show hounds in all shapes, the type that Beckford describes as ideal is the fashionable type of to-day. In this he follows good old William Somerville, whose verses he quotes with gusto again and again.

From the literary point of view the gem of *Thoughts of Hunting* is the famous Letter XIII. Beckford has talked about the kennel, the hounds, and the hunt servants. He turns to the chase itself now, and one feels that he has been awaiting the opportunity and filling his lungs for it. The lucky friend is sent "a description of an imaginary chase," from arrival at covert-side to death. Thousands know the passage which begins, "How musical their tongues ! and as they get nearer to him, how the chorus fills !" But of these the majority know it in the cockney of Mr. John Jorrocks, for Surtees quotes and loves Beckford as much as Beckford quotes and loves Somerville. With all respect, from one who has always worshipped at *that* shrine, the words are too good to be so defaced.

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lark, he is found ! Now, where are all your sorrows, and your
s, ye gloomy souls ! or where your pains and aches, ye complain-
ones ! one halloo has dispelled them all. What a crash they
e ! and echo seemingly takes pleasure to repeat the sound. The
nished traveller forsakes his road, lured by its melody : the
ning ploughman now stops his plough ; and every distant
herd neglects his flock, and runs to see him break—what joy,
t eagerness, in every face !

d on through the run, through check, to view,
h the appropriate tags from Somerville, whom,
en he comes to the last mad excitement, he
ts at his own game.

ow, Reynard, look to yourself ! How quick they all give
tongues ! Little *Dreadnought*, how he works him ! The
ers, too, they now are squeaking at him. How close *Ven-*
ce pursues ! how terribly she presses ! It is just up with him !
ls ! What a crash they make ! the whole wood resounds !
t turn was very short ! There ! now—aye, now they have
! Who—hoop !

is in the midst of careful descriptions of the ideal
nel, with plans, a learned disquisition upon
it, pages upon hygiene, medical prescriptions,
eding nomenclature, the work of a huntsman,
whole business side of the game ! Beckford
gests with reason that Somerville was “ no great
hunter.” He himself, unlike the poet, had
particular affection for harriers. Though he
udes a chapter on them, though he had kept
m himself, he states that it was more for air and
rcise than for amusement that he followed them ;
nd if I could have persuaded myself to ride
the turnpike road to the three-mile stone and
k again, I should have thought that I had had

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no need of a pack of harriers." In this he is at one with Surtees, for we remember what Jorrocks had to say of hare-hunting. But he has not the latter's curious and entertaining passion for clothes, nor, apparently, his delight in horses. Of these he has little to say. He is without that itch for galloping, always galloping, which was the origin of steeple-chasing among hunting-men who thought what a fine sport would be theirs "if it were not for these damned hounds." I do not know that it is anywhere recorded whether he was a remarkable horseman, like Surtees and Adam Lindsay Gordon, or so clever a huntsman as Somerville. But by none, in verse or prose, have the great and undying principles of the science of fox-hunting been expressed at once so soundly and so brilliantly. That, with his pure English, bridges the hundred and fifty years very swiftly and makes of him a pleasant neighbour. The humanitarian objections to fox-hunting, with which we have to reckon, which all intelligent hunting-men take seriously, he did not understand. In all other respects he is, in the best sense, "up-to-date," a genial, learned, and amusing companion.

3. *HANDLEY CROSS*

Certain novelists, obviously outside the first rank, have created figures that are immortal and produced books which stand in a more honourable place upon the shelves of time than those of apparently more gifted brethren. It is the fame of Charles Lever to have made famous the rollicking

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Irish squire of a hundred and twenty years ago ; the claret-drinking, duelling sportsman and gamester then in the heyday of his picturesque career. Robert Smith Surtees has accomplished a feat greater than this. He has written the greatest English novel of which fox-hunting is the main theme ; he has also bequeathed to us the finest portraits we have of a band of English worthies during the middle thirty years of the last century. To neglect Surtees is to miss a whole aspect of English character. Thackeray, an artist incomparably greater, did not turn his attention to that side of life which interested his friend. Dickens, the other supreme novelist of the day, knew little about it ; and would probably have both sentimentalized and brutalized it by exaggeration had he discovered it. As for Trollope, though I am aware my views are unfashionable, I would rather have ten pages from Surtees than any one of his books. Whyte Melville few of us can to-day take seriously. Surtees cannot be replaced either as a portrait-painter in his own *genre* or as an exponent of the full-blooded humour of seventy years ago.

In him we see the case of a writer to whom his public has clung stoutly in spite of the contrary advice of those from whom they might have expected sound guidance. In his lifetime he was not only popular generally, but warmly admired by judges so good as Thackeray and Lockhart. Tastes changed then among the critics. Those of the later Victorian era found him uncultivated. In more than one work on English literature he is dismissed with a passing reference to his coarseness

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and his good fortune in having John Leech for an illustrator. But all the while his own particular public stood by him. *Handley Cross*, *Mr. Sponge's Sporting Tour*, *Mr. Facey Romford's Hounds*, might still be found, a paper-knife handled with a hare's pad stuck into their pages for book-mark, on the smoking-room table of the country house. Of late, with the coming of cheap reprints, the circle of that public has been much extended. And from occasional references to his name it would appear that the critics are beginning to be aware of the error of their ways. It is to be hoped that this is so. For this north-country squire is one of the most English of all our novelists; English as the old brown ale that has disappeared almost as completely as the England of which he wrote, and with the same wholesome and irrecoverable tang.

Surtees is neither subtle nor an authority upon nice shades of character. He writes from without rather than from within. He has, however, to his credit a feat as wonderful as those of any of the patient probers who are our novelists of to-day. He has contrived to make live that extraordinary passion for the chase which is deep graven in English character. This passion, this spirit which makes John Jorrocks declare: "It's the merry breath of my body! The liver and bacon of my existence! . . . I believes my 'ead is nothin' but one great bump of 'untin'. 'Untin' fills my thoughts by day, and many a good run I have in my sleep," has appeared in Britons of every rank and station. So closely is it bound up with our

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national life, that men who have never seen a fox, who could not distinguish the chime of hounds from the noise made by a kindergarten in the play-hour, if asked what is the pre-eminent British sport, will yet give their vote for fox-hunting. True it is that the greater part of our population knows little of it, and can know little ; true that every year the proportion of hunting-men to the whole population grows smaller. Hunting is, none the less, in a fashion almost mystical, bound up with our being, with our conception of ourselves and that which others hold of us as a people. Changing conditions may prevent its endurance. But if it passes it will remain as a picturesque and romantic national memory, which no other sport of our day can aspire to equal.

Surtees is by no means a man of one novel ; yet had he not written *Handley Cross* far fewer readers would have pushed their inquiries among the Victorian novelists so far as his other works. It is John Jorrocks who has introduced them to Soapey Sponge, to Facey Romford, to Lucy Glitters and Lord Ladythorne. If for naught else, they owe him for that a debt of gratitude. But *Handley Cross* is far ahead of the other books, and it is Jorrocks above all who makes it so. He is one of our national treasures. Leaving genius outside the question, there was a certain gusto in the days when Falstaff was created that cannot be reproduced to-day. But Jorrocks, in his humble fashion, comes nearer to Falstaff than does any other figure that the last century produced. He is of noble proportions, in more senses than the literal one.

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There is in him an inexhaustible fund of rich, racy humour, peculiarly our own. There is perhaps one character only in the literature of his age whom we know better : Mr. Pickwick. For this knowledge it is obvious that Surtees owes much to his great illustrator ; but I cannot admit the pretensions of some critics that he owes almost all. The debt of Dickens to a lesser, but still brilliant, illustrator is quite as great with regard to Pickwick. Without the artists we should love both the characters. With their aid, if Jorrocks and Pickwick were to come down the street together arm in arm, we should all know them and welcome them. What a welcome we should give them !

Handley Cross, I have suggested, has an appeal for others than those who hunt, though perhaps little for those who have not some interest in hunting. It is far more than a pageant of sporting England of its time. Surtees was a satirist of high order ; he would sometimes appear rather a cruel one, were it not for the heartiness and infection of his laughter. He follows hard upon the footsteps of Dickens in his depiction of the oddity and the humbug, but, unlike him, is always coolly detached and mocking. He laughs at his freaks and rogues ; but neither frowns upon them nor weeps for them. And what a gallery of both there are in *Handley Cross* ! Roger Swizzle and Sebastian Mello, the cleverly contrasted quacks ; Miserrimus Doleful, Mrs. Barnington, Mr. Marmaduke Muleygrubs, the "little old gentleman" at whose house Charley Stobbs passed the night, and many others, are old friends to whose company we return again and again.

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Pomponius Ego really is cruel, but he preserves for us, like a fly in amber, a remarkable figure that could have existed only in nineteenth-century England: the famous sporting journalist who wrote under the name of "Nimrod."

However, it is for Jorrocks and James Pigg in the hunting-field and for the lectures on hunting that we go to *Handley Cross*. The runs on the "Cat and Custard-pot" day, that at Pinch-me-Near, the famous last day on which the old customer is made to "cry *capevi*," are the work of a man who knew every turn of the game and could describe it with extraordinary verve. The style is abrupt and careless, with small effort to round a phrase; but so virile, so happy in its imagery, that it may be called fine prose. Surtees may not have been able to write grammatically the Queen's English, but that of "the Author of *Mr. Sponge's Sporting Tour*," as he called himself in his title-pages, was good enough to carry down to immortality the work of any man.

"How I wish I was a heagle!" now exclaimed Mr. Jorrocks, eyeing the wide-stretching vale before him. "How I wish I was a heagle, 'overin' over 'em, secin' which 'ound has the scent, which hasn't, and which are runnin' frantic for blood. . . ."

There is nothing now between him and the hounds, save a somewhat rough piece of moorland, but our master not being afraid of the pace so long as there is no leaping, sails away in the full glow of enthusiastic excitement. He is half frantic with joy!

The hounds now break from scent to view and chase the still flying fox along the hill-side—Duster, Vanquisher, and Hurricane have pitched their pipes up at the very top of their gamut, and the rest come shrieking and screaming as loudly as their nearly pumped-out wind will allow.

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Dauntless is upon him, and now a snap, a turn, a roll, and it's all over with Reynard.

Now Pigg is off his horse and in the midst of the pack, now he's down, now he's up, and there's a pretty scramble going on!

"Leave him! leave him!" cries Charley, cracking his whip in aid of Pigg's efforts. A ring is quickly cleared, the extremities are whipped off, and, behold, the fox is ready for eating.

"Oh Pigg, you're a brick! a fire-brick!" gasps the heavily perspiring Mr. Jorrocks, throwing himself exhausted from his horse, which he leaves outside the now riotous ring, and making up to the object of his adoration, he exclaimed, "Oh, Pigg, let us fraternize!" Whereupon Jorrocks seized Pigg by the middle, and hugged him like a Polar bear, to the mutual astonishment of Pigg and the pack.

"'Unting," says Mr. Jorrocks, "has been my 'obby ever since I could keep an 'oss, and long before—a southerly wind and a cloudy sky are my delight—no music like the melody of 'ounds." The passion is sincere. Herein lies, in fact, much of the carelessly worn artistry of Surtees. Beneath all the banter and caricature there is a sort of Dyonisian fervour about Jorrocks that raises him to the rank of the heroes. It is one more tribute to his creator's skill that this fat figure of fun, neither huntsman nor horseman, too heavy to keep a good place and too timid to ride for it if he were able, is yet the supreme type of the hunting man.

There is a breeze of the open air blowing through all the pages of *Handley Cross*, with just whiff enough in it of "the Biggest Fox whatever was seen," to set us all longing to "make him cry *capevi*."

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4. REYNARD THE FOX

Mr. Masfield has in his poetical career passed through several phases. He begins as poet of the sea.

*The sailor, the stoker of steamers, the man with the clout,
The chantyman bent at the halliards, putting a tune to the shout,
The drowsy man at the wheel and the tired look-out,
Of these shall my songs be fashioned, my tales be told.*

It does not need a professor of poetry to tell us where this sort of thing comes from. The mark of Mr. Kipling is upon it. But it is not the best Mr. Kipling. It has not his thrill, his joy of battle. It has a sense of weariness and fatigue that is not in him. That is one characteristic of this period ; unconscious imitation in a minor key of the man who at that moment was dominating English minds. Another is a romantic love of small bright things. Jewels, moidores, doubloons, flash through these early verses. These things are charming, but they become, if too long indulged in, the very hall-mark of the minor poet.

Mr. Masfield soon quitted them. The second phase is the slightly self-conscious "poetical" period of the long narrative poems written before the war. The most powerful of these, which showed least self-consciousness, was the first, *The Everlasting Mercy*. *The Widow in the Bye Street*, *Dauber*, *The Daffodil Fields*, show a steady advance in technical skill, but also a steady growth of mannerism and of that querulousness with society which had been the keynote of his novel, *The Street*

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of *To-day*. Mr. Masfield seemed to be going the way of so many, drifting into an arid intellectualism and away from those channels through which flowed the stream of his true genius.

The war, which threw many poets off their balance and left them vainly spitting in the face of destiny, had another effect on Mr. Masfield. It made him aware, as Charles Péguy was made aware in the few short weeks before he fell in action, of the strength of the roots which bound him to his native soil. It seems to have given him a direct inspiration to become a poet of England. We see a new comprehension of the power and the comeliness of tradition ; of that mystic life, outside the individual lives of individual men and women, which is the soul of a nation. I do not pretend that there were not glimpses of these things in earlier work. I do not forget, for example, that overwhelming reply of old "purple parson" to the ranting of Saul Kane in *The Everlasting Mercy*, that seems to put all Bolingbroke and Burke, most typically English of political thinkers, into a dozen lines. And what could be more touching than the memory of England that comes to Michael Gray and Lion Occleve in *The Daffodil Fields*, as they ride at night over the ranges of the River Plate ?

Thinking of English fields which that moon saw,
Fields full of quiet beauty lying hushed
At midnight in the moment full of awe,
When the red fox comes creeping, dewy-brushed

Yet to me it seems as if another spirit, a deeper

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philosophy of nationalism, appears full-fledged in *August* 1914, which is perhaps the finest achievement among the short poems. England is no mere community of living men, it tells us. She is a vast spiritual entity that enfolds the living and the dead. In such a spot as the Berkshire Downs, the same for hundreds upon hundreds of years, at such a time above all as when that summons came, the two draw very close to one another.

Surely above these fields a spirit broods,
A sense of many watchers muttering near
Of the lone Downland with the forlorn woods
Loved to the death, inestimably dear.

A muttering from beyond the veils of Death
From long-dead men, to whom this quiet scene
Came among blinding tears with the last breath,
The dying soldier's vision of his queen.

All the unspoken worship of those lives
Spent in forgotten wars at other calls
Glimmers upon these fields where evening drives
Beauty like breath, so gently darkness falls.

Here, surely, our poet has found himself and his true destiny at last.

And now, with that vision of England and English tradition burnt deep into his spirit, he has gone forward to paint typical scenes of English life. With great courage he has turned to sport, throwing down a challenge to those who do not believe it possible to marry such a subject to high poetry. He has had the vision to understand how deeply the love of sport is engrained in the English spirit

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and how faithfully that spirit can be portrayed by watching the English at play.

Mr. Masfield achieved a great triumph in his first venture into this field, but did not quite repeat it in his second. *Right Royal* has one great merit ; it is the first really notable poem on horse-racing in English. It has, so far as I am aware, but one predecessor of any importance : *How we Beat the Favourite*. Adam Lindsay Gordon's blend of Nat Gould and Swinburne is spirited verse, that warms the blood and lingers in the memory. But *Right Royal* is a more important effort, by a far more accomplished and ambitious craftsman. The former is swift action ; the latter action equally swift but marked by keen thought. Yet it does not compare, either technically or in spirit, with *Reynard the Fox*.

Reynard the Fox has in it the very sap of England ; the real, not the artificial, breath of the countryside, the true, not the sentimentalized, figures of country types. There are in it many remarkable poetical passages, wherein is accomplished that mystery of the poet's art ; when for a moment, as it were, narrative stops, a magic change takes place, and from the ashes of the poet's materials there arises an image of pure beauty. But, to speak truth, these moments are rare, and they are not the most striking characteristic of the poem. That which is, to my mind, is the wonderful gift for something very like reporting in fine verse that Mr. Masfield displays throughout it. It may appear that this statement is a poor compliment. On the contrary, it is a very high one. Mr. Masfield makes

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alive for us every one of the characters he introduces. The scene is idyllic, but the beings who people it are realistic. The lives, the inner minds—some of them base enough—of all those who meet at the “Cock and Pye” on the morning of that magnificent run are revealed to us in a few lines. The picture of the hounds is Mr. Munnings or Mr. Armour at their best. The lightning view of the scene suddenly emptied when the field has passed out of sight, with the “much bashed fence still dropping stick” is a typical example of his powers. That is a passage in which no poet’s magic was possible. It can be described in good verse, but not verse that has left earth behind. But, as Mr. Masfield describes it, it brings back to every one who has ever followed hounds something that he has seen but only half realized hitherto. The sensation of pace and excitement, again, is wonderfully reproduced. And, lastly, the story as told from the side of the hunted fox is finely imaginative indeed, but also in its way a piece of great reporting ; so much observation and knowledge of natural history must there have gone into its conception.

Mr. Masfield’s picture-gallery of the meet is full of portraits that are hard to forget. Cothill of the Sleins, whom we are to know better as hero of *Right Royal* ; the Manors, old Farmer Bennett—we have met them all, and will look with new eyes upon them when we meet them again. The parson who loved to hear “Hen left, hare right, cock over !” who was read in Arabic, Hebrew, Spanish, Greek ; whose voice was like “the tenor bell,” is perhaps a type that is passing, but he lives

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yet, and sad we shall be, too, when he is altogether gone. But of all that splendid gallery I like best the Riddens, father and daughter. Bill Ridden is frankly a ruffian, but one we have all liked and should be glad to know was at our elbow in any evil moment. Surely we can *see* the man tittuping to the meet :

riding Stormalong
(By Tempest out of Love-me-Long),
A proper handful of a horse
That nothing but the Aintree course
Could bring to terms, save Bill perhaps.
All sport, from bloody war to scraps,
Came well to Bill, that big-mouthed smiler.
They nicknamed him "the mug-beguiler,"
For Billy lived too much with horses,
In copers' yards and sharpers' courses,
To lack the sharper-coper streak.
He did not turn the other cheek
When struck (as English Christians do) ;
He boxed like a Whitechapel Jew.

His hand was like a chamois glove,
And riding was his chief delight.
He bred the chaser Chinese-White
From Lilybud by Mandarin.
And when his mouth tucked corners in,
And scent was high and hounds were going,
He went across a field like snowing
And tackled anything that came.

And Belle, that "strange, shy, lovely girl," with
the passionate joy in the open air that marks her
type, whom

The kittens in the barley-mow,
The setter's toothless puppies sprawling,
The blackbird in the apple calling,

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know better than any human being can, is a fitting pendant. These are types peculiarly English, and Mr. Masefield distils from them a quintessential English spirit. We must pardon him for making Sir Peter Bynd's hounds "great-chested," merely cautioning him to remember Somerville's warning against the hound "of size gigantic." Perhaps, as the late Lord Willoughby de Broke suggests, it was those great chests that lost their fox in the end.

Yet the loss of the fox, the change to another and a lesser one, which hounds killed after dusk, is inevitable. It comes, indeed, as a necessary relief. That first "Reynard" is Mr. Masefield's hero, rather even than splendid Robin Dawe, the Huntsman. We have lived with him through the previous night, have followed field by field his gallant struggle, his wiles, his agony of fear as his body stiffens. We have come to sympathize with him. When he reaches at last his earth in Mourne End Wood, to find it stopped, the strain becomes almost intolerable. We rejoice that he has put hounds upon another fox, so that Dawe and Dansey are not sure at the very end whether they changed or not. It is a tribute to sentiment in the poet, but one that his readers demand of him. We end on a happy, quiet note.

The hunt came home and the hounds were fed,
They climbed to their bench and went to bed ;
The horses in stable loved their straw.
" Good-night, my beauties," said Robin Dawe.

* * * * *

Then the moon came quiet and flooded full
Light and beauty on clouds like wool,

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On a feasted fox at rest from hunting,
In the beech-wood grey where the brocks were grunting.

* * * * *

The beech-wood grey rose dim in the night
With moonlight fallen in pools of light,
The long dead leaves on the ground were rimed ;
A clock struck twelve and the church-bells chimed.

Is *Reynard the Fox* a greater poem than *The Chace* ? To a reader of to-day it certainly offers more pleasure and excitement. But it is equally marked by the peculiar characteristics of its age, and will probably feel the breath of changing fashion as adversely. Neither one nor the other is so obviously destined for immortality as *Handley Cross*. At least for this generation and the next we may say with Tom Dansey :

There've been few runs longer and none more hot,
We shall talk of to-day until we die.

Henri de Régnier--Poète et Romancier

I. THE POET

A FRENCHMAN once remarked to me that English admirers of his country's literature were inclined to wax enthusiastic over the wrong people, or at least to fail to see its great names in proper perspective. He gave as most flagrant instances our inability to appreciate the greatest of all French poets, Racine, and what he termed our idolatrous cult for Baudelaire. I retorted with a *tu quoque*; instancing their neglect of Shelley and their excessive admiration of Poe and Wilde. It is, of course, inevitable that each nation should approach the writers of the other in its own spirit and from its own point of view. Just as Mr. Thomas Hardy is too essentially English in blood and in bone to be completely understood of the French, so M. Henri de Régnier as a novelist is too purely Gallic to appeal to any English readers not steeped in French traditions.

This will explain why the second of contemporary French novelists should be so comparatively little

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known in England. It does not quite explain why the leader of the *Symboliste* poets and the most delightful exponent of *vers libres* should not have a wider public among us. We do not, perhaps, read very much modern French poetry. Yet another Symbolist, Samain, is so fashionable and popular that it might almost be said of his work that "*il n'y a pas de femme du monde qui ne l'a pas sur sa table.*" And Samain, with all his delicate charm, as of Sèvres china, is far below Henri de Régnier.

The poetry and prose of M. de Régnier are astonishingly different. I find the connecting links in his sense of the past, and in his aristocracy. As a poet, as a writer of romances, and as a man, he is, in the best sense of the word, an aristocrat. Through his monocle, the symbolic monocle of a Symbolist, he looks upon life and letters with a grave aloofness which has in it nothing of contempt. He is steeped in the traditions of a line of ancestors, soldiers and courtiers since the sixteenth century. The past gives a note of sadness, alike to his poetry and his prose. And, at least as a poet, he owes a very deep debt to his literary ancestry.

His Symbolism might be defined as a "descent from Parnassus." "My son-in-law," said Hérédia of him, soon after his marriage to his daughter, herself destined to poetic fame, "has more genius than I; but I have more talent than he." That sentence represents very well the relationship of the *Symbolistes* to the *Parnassiens*, of whom Hérédia was a shining example. As the *Parnassiens* are

ended from the Romantics, so are the *Sym-*
es of their lineage. The *Parnassiens* showed
 dvance in form ; the *Symbolistes* an advance
 ought. In both there is the same love of
 lled phrases ; in both certain key-words recur
 and again. Both are aloof from life. Of
 the delicious parody of M. Lajeunesse is a
 ism more profound than many solid tomes :

Pendant ce temps, insoucieuses de ces choses,
 les femmes, en leurs lits profonds, lisaient des proses.

he essence of Symbolism is the desire of the
 for a place of refuge from the world. M.
 de Gourmont speaks of this place of refuge
 "prison-house." At least the detention is
 ntary. The poet, as it were, shields himself
 a too close contact with facts—though he
 ; with facts, and even with ugly ones—by the
 of symbols. He expresses himself by means
 mbols. In a broad sense, all great poetry is
 olic. In a narrower sense the label is attached
 group, of which M. de Régnier is the leader,
 armé was the high priest and guardian of the
 eries, and to which Mr. Yeats and "A. E."
 drawn close in fraternity.

ers libres do not necessarily march hand in hand
 Symbolism. It is a matter of purely personal
 ion, but I myself prefer that portion of M. de
 nier's poetry in which he employs historical
 is—not always, however, in the historical
 ner—to his *vers libres*. I am quite prepared
 dmit, however, that his *vers libres* constitute

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his most important contribution to French poetry. And if M. de R gnier's studies in *vers libres* are for the conservative very modern music, none but very crusted conservatives will fail to realize that they are music. It is a curious fact that the French language, less well adapted than ours to the expression of the highest poetry, yet more charming when bridled to the most conventional of poetic rules, should also be more musical when all those rules are removed. English *vers libres* are too often harsh and unmusical. There is something of a jolt and jar about them that after a time tires the ear and the eye. It will, I think, be admitted that there is no jolting or jarring in the examples which I shall give below.

M. de R gnier's first book of poetry, *Les Lendemain*s, appeared in 1885, when he was twenty-one. It contained beautiful work, and work that in its quiet ease showed few traces of the prentice hand. It struck such a note as might have been expected from a young genius who had sat at the feet of Mallarm . The lines with which the book opens might have been written by Samain at his best :

J'ai r v  que ces vers seraient comme ces fleurs
Que fait tourner la main des ma tres ciseleurs
Autour des vases d'or aux savantes ampleurs ;

Et maintenant, gu ri de mes anciennes fi vres,
Je voudrais,   mon tour, comme les bons orf vres,
Enguirlander la coupe o  j'ai tremp  mes l vres.

In *Apaisement*, the second volume, published in 1886, there is a note of resignation, the resignation

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of twenty-two ! In *Sites* the poet has begun to build. In *Episodes*, 1888, he has begun to people his sites. Here the note is stronger. The poems are of greater length, and each is summarized by a sonnet set at the head. The style is still largely imitative. "La Galère" and "Paroles dans la Nuit" are strongly reminiscent of Mallarmé. There is still disillusionment, not now the disillusionment of extreme youth, but that of a soul that will always strive to attain the gloriously impossible :

Serre en tes douces mains les miennes qui sont vides,
Mes deux mains de rameur qui n'a su conquérir
L'or des pommes miraculeuses d'Hespérides !

Explorateur des mers de pourpre et de saphyr,
Je suis las de la route de cette aventure
Du blanc Septentrion jusqu'aux côtes d'Ophyr.

This, surely, is Symbolism at its best.

Qu'en songe, published in 1892, is remarkable for the examples of *vers libres* that it contains. It is remarkable also for its philosophic attitude, that of a looker-on from above. There is a fine and gracious serenity, a breadth of vision in these new poems, but there is also a definite refusal to depart from the centre-point of observation. The following extract shows both the *vers libres* at their most harmonious and this philosophic isolation. The poet is sitting at a cross-roads in the forest. He describes the beauty of the different paths along which his eye can travel. Then he exclaims :

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Je n'irai pas vers vos chênes
Ni le long de vos bouleaux et de vos frênes
Et ni vers vos soleils, vos villes et vos eaux,
O routes !
J'entends venir les pas de mon passé qui saigne,
Les pas que j'ai crus morts, hélas, et qui reviennent,
Et qui semblent me précéder de vos échos,
O routes.

Here is the true note of the recluse that is the key-note of Symbolism. It is here, in its first outpourings, that is revealed the limitation of that spirit. The Symbolist school has produced poets who are also philosophers, but its philosophy is and must be a philosophy of the few, of the elect. It has not, it could not, have produced a Shelley or a Hugo.

As regards the form of this short extract, it will be seen that, as in so much of the *vers libres* of M. de Régnier, rime is not abandoned. Of its musical quality the best test is to read it aloud. It has the same place in poetry as much of the work of Debussy in music.

Les Jeux rustiques et divins, a bulky volume in comparison with the foregoing, contains the smaller volumes, *Aréthuse*, *Les Roseaux de la Flûte*, *Inscriptions pour les treize Portes de la Ville*, and a number of odes and "odelettes." In *Les Roseaux de la Flûte* is the magnificent poem "Le Vase," a pæan of the creative inspiration. The poet represents himself as a sculptor fashioning a mighty vase. His hammer rings loud in the summer air. The magic landscape about him breeds visions. A nymph whispers to him :

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Sculpte la pierre
Selon la forme de mon corps en tes pensées

—a most beautiful image of the whole poetic art.
The visions increase and swarm madly about the
artist :

Et l'on voyait, assis sur la croupe qui rue,
Tenant les thyrses tors et des outres ventruës,
Des satyres boiteux piqués par des abeilles,
Et les bouches de crin et les lèvres vermeilles
Se baisaient, et la ronde immense et frénétique,
Sabots lourds, pieds légers, toisons, croupes, tuniques,
Tournait éperdument autour de moi, qui, grave,
Au passage, sculptais aux flancs gonflés du vase
Le tourbillonnement des forces de la vie

The poet in his ecstasy has moved a long way from
Stéphane Mallarmé.

I have space to quote none of the splendid
"Inscriptions," and but a few lines from the first
of the "Odelettes," which are really delightful
little songs in *vers libres* :

Un petit roseau m'a suffi
Pour faire frémir l'herbe haute
Et tout le pré
Et les doux saules
Et le ruisseau qui chante aussi ;
Un petit roseau m'a suffi
A faire chanter la forêt.

Passing by *Les Médailles d'Argile* and *La Cité des
Eaux*, which is Versailles, I come to *La Sandale
ailée*. Here M. de Régnier has to a great extent
abandoned *vers libres*, though "Septembre," one
of the best poems in the book, is in that form.

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He has not, as one might have expected, made any further experiments in poetic artifice. If there is no sign of a mere repetition of the same note, still less any of failing power, neither is there any notable advance to record. M. de R gnier had in "Le Vase" reached the summit of his endeavour. He could and can no higher go. In his minor key, "Fin de Journ e," full of the sadness of autumn and evening, is equal to anything he has written.

I shall say but a few words with regard to his war poems. They have feeling and passion, but they lack that stamp of the inevitable that is on some of the best English and French war poetry—that written by the young men who fought in the war. An exception is "Le beau Retour" :

Sera-ce un jour d' t , sera-ce un jour d'automne,
Demain ou dans longtemps ?

Un de ces jours d'hiver o  dans le ciel frissonne
L'attente du printemps ?

Ou, par quelque matin de joie et de jeunesse,
De splendeur et d'amour ?

Je ne sais, mais je sens d j  ton all gresse.
D lire du retour !

Chaque c ur,   grands coups, bat, palpite et tressaille
Pour vous qui reviendrez,

Rapportant avec vous l'odeur de la bataille
En vos haillons sacr s.

Here high patriotism and high poetry, sometimes chary of mating just now, are happily wedded.

This, then, must conclude my very short sketch of Henri de R gnier, Poet. It is, frankly, a sketch

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rather than a criticism. Englishmen, as I have hinted above, are inclined to make lamentable judgments when they deal with even the historically great names of French poetry. Far harder the task to appraise a contemporary and an innovator. I have expressed a view that Symbolism is not capable of putting forth a great poet, in the sense that Milton, Shelley, Keats ; Racine, Hugo, Lamartine—the French *are* far below us in the greatest poetry after all ; one sees it more than ever in writing such names—are great. But in that wider sense, in which France may be said to have, let us say, thirty “great” poets, I believe that the title may fairly be bestowed upon him. For this is not a mediocre mind endowed with artistry and singing power. This is the mind of a thinker.

At least, while M. de Régnier has lived to prove himself the equal in talent of Hérédia, we may agree with the latter that the younger man has more genius. In thought, in power of conception, he stands above the rest of his school ; in execution he is not over-matched by any in it. He has mastered completely the task which he has chosen for himself.

2. *THE WRITER OF ROMANCES*

A new Henri de Régnier confronts us now. I remember a phrase in an old essay of Mr. Gosse's, which did less than justice to Henri de Régnier, Romancier, to the effect that the latter, having attained fame as a poet after the order of Keats, aspired to be a novelist after the order of Smollett.

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Mr. Gosse seemed inclined to grumble at the combination, but surely it is a splendid one. Instead of the fastidious poet, whose poetry is pure in a sense both æsthetic and moral, we have the reconstructor of a past society, examining with an amused smile its debaucheries, revelling in its broadest japes and its coarsest language, on the one hand ; and, on the other, an amateur of present-day comedy of intrigue not very far removed from M. Paul Bourget. For as a novelist the fame of M. de Régnier is supported upon two pillars of unequal thickness. He has his seventeenth- and eighteenth-century style, and he has his modern style. M. de Régnier is also a critic, and a singularly acute one, in *Figures et Caractères*. Yet he is by nature a critic of society rather than of letters. He dabbled in literary criticism probably because all his great contemporaries were good literary critics.

I have said that the two pillars are of unequal thickness. I regard M. de Régnier's historical romances as infinitely more important than his modern novels. In the first he is unique ; in the second but one among many very clever craftsmen. I shall devote the greater part of the space at my disposal to a consideration of the former.

M. de Régnier was a poet long before he became a novelist. The training of years of writing verses rendered impossible any uncertainty of craft when he came to his second task. He starts full-fledged as a prose stylist. It was not till 1900, fifteen years after his first poems had appeared, that he published *La double Maîtresse*.

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Here we have not only a faithful and patient reconstruction of society, but a most curious study of character. Poor M. Nicolas de Galandot is strangely pathetic as well as being a figure of fun. He lives through a long life without—deterred by timidity, not lack of sharpness of desire—ever achieving the physical side of love; which is curious to any observer, bewildering to any Frenchman, and must be astounding to any French novelist. It is the entrance of his terrible mother into the room just when, as a boy, his wanton little cousin has tempted him into her arms, that first prevents him from embarking on these experiences. Later, in Paris, where she has become a noted libertine, she scorns his timid advances. The scene shifts to Italy, where poor M. de Galandot falls under the evil spell of an Italian courtesan, who with her lover sucks him dry. The story of his cousin's later days is particularly scandalous. All through a hundred little touches, descriptions of dress and interiors, turns of phrase, presentation of points of view that are not ours, remind us that we are in another century and recreate for us its atmosphere. M. de Régnier never makes the mistake of investing his characters with codes of morals or sensibilities that belong to the twentieth century. They live for us just because they have the sentiments of their own day.

His second book was *Les Amants singuliers*. The scenes of these three stories are laid in Italy, which has always attracted him. About all three there is a savagery and a cruel lust very different from the polished debauchery we encounter in his French

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stories. *La Femme en Marbre* is truly a little masterpiece. Here again those so clever turns of phrase make alive for us the atmosphere of the age. In the following passage, for example, we are told how the creative desire which makes of him a sculptor springs up in the rough soldier of fortune :

Ce fut ainsi qu'à voir vivre je vécus. Je fis la guerre et l'amour. La façon dont se croisent les épées et se joignent les bouches me passiona également. Un jour, ma maîtresse m'embrassa avec un geste si charmant que je voulus en fixer le souvenir ailleurs qu'en ma mémoire. Celle des hommes est si incertaine que même les images qui l'ont le plus délicieusement émue y sont brèves et fugitives.

That last sentence strikes me as a delicate archaism. The sentiment is not modern, or at least not such as a modern would in the circumstances think it necessary to express. Sometimes, as in *Le bon Plaisir* and *Les Rencontres de M. de Bréot*, he goes further. Writing deliberately as if he were a contemporary commentator, he expresses such sentiments himself instead of putting them into the mouths of his characters. He has the trick of setting aside, when he enters upon an historical romance, every trace of that moral sense which most modern writers find themselves unable to shed and by a sort of pensive *libertinage* identifying himself with the world he is describing. By such artifice does he build and maintain the desired illusion in his readers' minds.

After the sculptor has achieved his masterpiece, the marble statue of the beautiful peasant girl *Giulietta*, the latter becomes the mistress of one of the brothers *Corcorone*, his dearest friends. The

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other brother being desolated, the sculptor gives him the statue. The two brothers become estranged, each being fiercely covetous of what the other possesses, one of the woman, the other of her image. The climax comes when Giulietta dies of fever. In a terrible struggle for possession of the statue the brothers stab each other to death. The sculptor believes that the statue, endowed with life and evil power, has brought about these misfortunes. He attacks it savagely with his hammer and smashes it to pieces. There is in this passionate story something of the atmosphere of such a tale of Boccaccio's as *The Calamities of Jealousy*.

There is the same atmosphere of blood and lust in the other stories. *La Courte Vie de Balthazar Aldramini, Véntien*, with its rape and two murders, is yet more savage. But these tales are not horrible. They are conceived and told in a fashion so fantastic that they do not shock us. With all his fidelity to detail, all his tricks to create a sense of reality, M. de Régnier is essentially a Romantic. The daggers of his assassins do not pierce our hearts, however much they prick our imaginations.

Le bon Plaisir I am inclined to consider M. de Régnier's finest romance. "*Le bon plaisir*" is the good pleasure of King Louis XIV, which it is the aim in life of Antoine de Pocancy to attain, and of which after all his efforts he is robbed. That extraordinary age seems to live again before our eyes. The pages are crowded with portrait upon portrait that stamp themselves upon our memory ; M. le Maréchal de Manissart and his termagant wife, whom he can escape and deceive only when

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on campaign ; M. de Pocancy, "*le bel Anaxidomène*," Antoine's rakish father (*Ah ! quel homme ce fut entre deux draps !*) ; Monsieur and Madame Dalanzières the prosperous intendant and his flighty wife ; the old quack doctor with his bitter contempt for humanity, and a dozen others. The country châteaux, the battlefields of Flanders, the Court at Versailles ; sieges, marches, love-making, pass before us in one brilliant scene after another. The book is not for babes. On the title-page is a saying of Madame de Maintenon : *Un peu de crapule se pardonne en ce temps-ci.*

There is one wonderful piece of writing, when young Antoine de Pocancy comes to the camp of the *Maréchal de Manissart* to serve under him, and looks down upon it at night :

Au bas, dans la plaine, tout dormait. Les feux de veille rougissaient la nuit. Elle était tranquille, claire, et argentée d'une lune qui montait au ciel comme une bombe limpide et silencieuse. Des milliers et des milliers d'hommes composaient un seul sommeil. Il y avait là des gens de toutes sortes, venus des vignes bourguignonnes et des terres picardes ; des Manceaux et des Beaucerons aussi bien que des Périgourdins ou des Gascons. La France dormait là. Tous, ils avaient quitté leurs villes, leurs châteaux et leurs chaumières pour former cette masse vivante. Maintenant ils étaient vêtus de bleu ou de rouge, portaient le mousquet ou la pique, traînaient des canons, suivaient une cornette ou un étendard. . . .

Et Antoine éprouvait quelque amertume à sentir que les belles actions qu'il ne pouvait manquer d'accomplir n'auraient pas pour témoin le royal regard qui sait distinguer, même dans la poussière des combats, ceux qui méritent d'être remarqués, le Roi, pour qui des milliers d'hommes dormaient là, le mousquet ou la pique à côté de lui, sur l'échiquier des batailles et sous la bombe limpide et claire de la lune silencieuse.

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Les Rencontres de M. de Bréot is in the same vein, but is rather a series of scenes than a story, with more contemporary philosophy and less action than in *Le bon Plaisir*. M. de Bréot is an amiable and amused looker-on at life, its follies and its deceptions. The one motive that stirs him to action is his passion for the charming Madame de Blionne which is in the end requited. But the main interest of the book is, as its title implies, in M. de Bréot's varied acquaintances, chief amongst them the appalling M. Le Varlon de Verrigny, the even less pleasing M. Floreau de Bercaillé, and the great contractor M. Herbou.

M. Floreau de Bercaillé is the vilest type of those "*Libertins*" who thought, as the author remarks, with Ninon de l'Enclos, "*qu'on est bien à plaindre, quand on a besoin de la religion pour se conduire, car c'est une preuve qu'on a l'esprit bien borné ou le cœur bien corrompu.*" M. de Bréot also is an unbeliever, but he is a gentleman, which M. Floreau de Bercaillé is very far from being.

Pour être vrai, M. de Bréot pensait tout bonnement que l'impiété la mieux établie n'oblige pas à manger goulûment et à boire outre mesure, non plus qu'à fumer des pipes de tabac en poussant des jurements licencieux et en adressant au ciel des bravades fanfaronnes, ni à coucher avec la première venue, ce que font aussi bien les dévots que les libertins.

His philosophy is that of the cultured "*Esprit Fort*" of his age, a philosophy of thrice-distilled materialism.

Enfin, pour être bref [he tells us], je me suis borné à l'idée de ne vivre qu'une fois, et je m'y tiens. Ce sentiment, loin de m'attrister,

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m'a donné un grand désir d'être heureux et de bien employer le temps d'une existence qui doit être toute terrestre. J'aime le plaisir et j'en ai goûté quelques-uns. L'un de ceux que je préfère est de chanter sur le luth. Je sais en accompagner agréablement une voix qui n'est pas vilaine. Je trouve une volupté singulière à joindre mon corps à un corps de femme. C'est à ces occupations que j'ai passé les années de ma vie jusqu'à l'âge de vingt-cinq ans où je suis aujourd'hui.

M. de Régnier is fascinated by the "*libertin*." If M. de Bréot is the best, he has one successor not unworthy of his company. This is M. de la Péjaudie, the unfortunate hero of *La Pécheresse*, student of nature and debauchee, who dies a galley-slave rather than betray the last of a formidable tally of mistresses. M. de la Péjaudie also is a musician, but his instrument is the flute. Nothing in life did he find more agreeable than to perform upon it, having before his eyes a fine piece of scenery or a fine woman.

One notes in all these books a masterful reconstruction of spirit as well as of customs. It is, indeed, spirit rather than outward material that is recreated in them. Completely documented as their author is, he does not immerse himself in antiquarian detail like Flaubert or even Prosper Mérimée. He takes his readers with him into his world, but gives them few exact descriptions of places or clothes. They do not require them. They are not being instructed in a bygone age, but are living in it for the time being. They do not need to be told exactly how M. de Bréot is dressed. They knew so exactly how he thinks that their imagination can teach them the rest.

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Needless to say, when M. de Régnier enters this country he becomes as pitiless as itself. The horrors of a countryside ravaged by war or famine, the plight of the stricken wretches condemned to a death of misery in the King's galleys, are examined curiously and with scarce a hint of feeling. He never departs from his attitude of ironical aloofness. He leaves it to the reader to commiserate, if he will, with the victims of wrong. That is one of the differences between him and M. Anatole France. There is in the younger man none of that "pitié à base de sensualité," which M. René Gillouin has discovered in the elder. Rather is there a touch of cruelty with the same basis.

The modern novels of M. de Régnier have many of the characteristics of the historical. In one of them, *Le Passé vivant*, the past holds the central interest even though the time of the story is the present. It is the tragedy of a young man and girl who feel themselves so dominated by the past that they are fated to reproduce the unhappy love of two of their ancestors. It ends with the death of the man, who blows out his brains on the grave of his ancestor, killed in battle in Italy.

It must be confessed that there is a more than remarkable similarity in the modern novels of M. de Régnier. His young men are, as a rule, after the same model, and their fates are often similarly tragic. *Romaine Mirmault* surpasses *Le Passé vivant* in that there are *two* suicides in it, while in *La Peur de l'Amour* the hero is killed in a duel, and, in *La Flambé*, he is left wandering alone in the exile of the East, his mistress having married another

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man. It is with real relief that one arrives at the last few pages of *L'Amphisbène*, to find Julien Delbray, a more than usually weak-minded hero, for whom the worst was to be feared, and Laure de Lérins, in each other's arms. Personally, I was left in harassing doubt as to their fate for more than a year, the book, half read, having been in the pocket of a "British Warm" which was captured in a car by the Germans in the retreat of March, 1918. One and all, these modern heroes lack the dash of their ancestors in the historical books. They are timid in the presence of women. They interject gently, "*Oui, madame*," and "*Non, madame*," in their conversations with the brilliant talkers whom M. de Régnier loves so well to create. It is perhaps because the ladies are thereby enabled to sparkle more brightly that they are, as a rule, complaisant when put to the test.

For complaisant they are, it must be admitted. Almost every one of them yields. Even the charming Romaine Mirmault, fierce in her virtue, curses herself that she has not done so when the man who loves her shoots himself. But they are one and all delightful, from the unhappy girl, Juliette de Valentin, in *La Peur de l'Amour*, to the gay widow, Marguerite d'Esclaragues, in *Les Vacances d'un jeune Homme sage*.

This last is the best of all. The book is neither of the present day nor of the distant past, but of the early 'eighties, and doubtless filled with its author's own memories of his eighteenth year. M. Auguste-Louis-Jules Le Bégat de La Boulerie, the old genealogist, is a figure worthy to stand beside

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the Maréchal de Manissart. It is altogether a fine sketch of the *noblesse de province* of thirty or forty years ago.

It has a further importance. In a short preface M. de Régnier has put before us his literary aims, and explained the connection between his ancient and modern romances.

Ce petit roman, qu'j'aime beaucoup [as who, indeed, would not?], a assez peu l'air de ressembler aux ouvrages du même genre que j'ai déjà donnés au public, pour valoir peut-être la peine de faire remarquer qu'il en est moins différent qu'il ne le paraît.

Comme eux, en effet, il essaie de raconter certaines façons de vivre, soit du temps passé, soit de notre temps

"Certain modes of living, whether of the past or of our own time." That, then, has been M. de Régnier's goal. And observe that he makes no attempt to describe anything that he does not completely understand. His historical romances have no smell of oil, but they bear on every page proof of the patient study he has given to their centuries. His modern novels deal with one class alone—the ancient French nobility into which he himself was born, which is his atmosphere.

The question asked about M. de Régnier's place in poetry is easier to answer as regards his prose. It may well be that all his modern work will be, for a critic of a hundred years hence, merely matter to be considered in the mass with hundreds of other brilliant "studies for a future history of society," as M. Abel Hermant has called his "Courpière" novels. *Le bon Plaisir* and *Les Rencontres de M. de Bréot* belong to French literature. They will be

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as important and as fascinating one or two hundred years hence as they are to-day. They are great work. They will stand on Time's bookshelf beside *Mademoiselle de Maupin* and *La Chartreuse de Parme*.

The Charles Men

A MOMENT when, in the breasts of so many in England, there is locked away some scene of war's horror and despair that they would fain forget may seem untimely for the launching of a work which has for subject that horror and despair at their blackest. Yet I do not believe that the present atmosphere will prove unfavourable to this book.¹ Some might vow to shun a tragedy how splendid soever if it had part or lot in the recent supreme tragedy. But so long as it be more distant, even though war be its subject, it will not exacerbate the wounds of war. For great tragedy does not exacerbate ; even while it wrings the heart it seems to purify and exalt the spirit. And tragedy in the most exact sense, the hero at odds with inexorable fate, unconquerable by the all-conquering. "bloody but unbowed," is a spectacle that, nobly handled, arouses pity perhaps, but not sorrow or melancholy ; rather than either pride and a feeling of comradeship. When the giants wage war against the gods, though to the gods must go victory, to the giants

¹ *The Charles Men.* By Verner von Heidenstam. Translated from the Swedish by Charles Wharton Stork.

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goes our sympathy. They are of our kin. No man can rise to be a god, but we have seen some men swell to the stature of giants.

Charles XII of Sweden is assuredly of that race. His exploits have given to the world one book commonly reckoned a classic ; incidentally, also, one of the most famous couplets in the English language. His amazing career is well known enough in its outlines for English-speaking people to follow it in the rambling and disconnected episodes of Verner von Heidenstam. They will open the book with curiosity as containing the work of an author of whom all they know is that he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1916. *The Charles Men* is an epic poem in prose, having, as the distinguished compatriot, Fredrik Book, who introduces von Heidenstam, puts it, "all the freedom, abandon, even caprice that belongs to verse." The author is, apparently, above all things a poet ; and it is said that in the opinion of his Swedish countrymen only in verse does he rise to his full greatness. That statement should be pondered by the reader when he comes to set down *The Charles Men*. If it be true, there can be few living poets of any nation who can be ranked as his equals. Of almost equal interest for us in this country is the fact that von Heidenstam belongs to the great line of the Romantics. Few of us can have expected that one of that line should come out of Scandinavia in these days.

The book consists of over thirty episodes in the military career of the King or of his soldiers, beginning with his accession to the throne in

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boyhood and ending with his death at Fredriks-hall. Sometimes these episodes are directly narrated ; sometimes they come from the mouth of one of the veteran "Charles Men," long years after their occurrence, as he warms his old scarred limbs by the fire in the presence of wondering juniors. They represent the tragedy of a man, and in a broader sense the tragedy of a nation, of the Swedish Empire. Charles the victorious we rarely see, and never in the hour of victory. We arrive at defeat half-way through the first volume, and at Poltava before it is concluded. Thereafter all is adversity. The second volume deals with the Turkish captivity and the return. The spirit of the whole may be said to be that of our Samuel Johnson's line :

A frame of adamant, a soul of fire.

It is the story of indomitable will at war with impossible odds ; of will and valour almost untinged by genius, but so mighty that they become greater and more potent than genius itself. Sometimes we are inclined to cry out with impatience at the narrow, infatuated obstinacy of Charles ; often to declare that he was crazy. And then, in a flash, von Heidenstam pulls us up with a passage of extraordinary beauty and intensity and forces us to realize the charm of his hero. His greatness, indeed, we are never permitted to forget. It is perhaps the most notable achievement of this notable work that the central figure, once depicted in heroic proportions, never shrinks, on the one hand, and, on the other, though he be fantastic,

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never becomes absurd. We never weary of watching him and hearing him speak. Not even his great antitype, the Tsar, who appears in one madly boisterous scene, drinking brandy, a woman on his knee, his dwarfs dancing about him, can for a moment supplant him in our interest.

All true masterpieces are masterpieces of style, nor does this break the rule. One shudders, however, in imagining what a hack translator would have made of it. Mr. Stork is not only not that : he is a writer of very fine prose. There are, indeed, certain occasions when he falls from grace. Sometimes he translates a Swedish proper name, leaving it odd and incongruous among others in their original spelling. And, very occasionally, he employs Americanized forms of English words which may be to-day inevitable, but which we cannot profess to love any the better for that. These are small matters. As a whole, the language is beautiful. At times, for a short period, it recalls that of Robert Louis Stevenson. Here is a piece of description that in its form, in the tinging of its romance with realism, does so :

Against the wish of the King, his bodyguards had wound his tent with hay and on that had laid sod, so that it was like a charcoal-kiln. It stood, not in the middle of the camp, but on the outermost edge and almost in darkness. Within, by the tent-pole, they had built a fireplace of stones and had brought there time and time again a red-hot cannon-ball. There was a wash-basin of pure silver, and on the table, beside the *Life of Alexander the Great* and the gold-bound Bible, stood a little silver-plated image of the dog Pompey, which had died. But the light blue silken brocade on the chair and field-bed was already worn and spotted. In the middle of the tent crouched the dogs, Turk and Snuffler, but the King lay

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among the fir-twigs on the ground. The small beer was done, and the lackey Hultman had had nothing but a glass of melted snow and two slack-baked biscuits to offer him for supper. After that he had spread his cape over him and put on his embroidered nightcap. There now, at the midday height of his victories, slept the King of the Swedes, and his narrow head was turned toward the languishing gleam of the last glowing cannon-ball.

That is a fine passage, yet it seems stamped with the marks of that deliberation which Stevenson could never wholly escape. But when a man writes deeply under the influence of his theme it often seems as though we could trace his hand moving slowly and carefully in the reflective passages, and, in the crises, rushing swiftly over the paper. That is true of von Heidenstam. These reflective passages, beautiful as they often are, have just the faintest scent of the lamp. But, take him in a moment of crisis, and there is no deliberation, nor any such scent. In excitement he rises to magnificence. One could quote from a dozen battle scenes, but perhaps these few lines, from the climax of the battle of Poltava, will suffice :

Then the troops began to waver. Lowenhaupt drew a pistol from the holster and pointed it at his own men. He threatened and struck. "Stand, boys, in Jesus' holy name ! I see the King's litter." "If the King is here, we'll stand," answered the soldiers. "Stand, boys ! halt, stand ! God with us !" they shouted to themselves, as if to control their limbs, that trembled and dripped with sweat and blood. But step by step they yielded, and the riders reined in their horses, until, with slashed faces and hands, they finally wheeled about in wild flight, man after man, and trampled one another down. Under the rising clouds of smoke they saw the King, who amid fallen troopers, bearers, and attendants lay on the ground without a hat, supported on his elbow, with the injured foot propped on the crushed litter, over which had been spread the clay-spotted cloak of the slain trooper Oxehufvud. The

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stiffened face was raven-black with grime, but the eyes kindled, and he stammered : " Swedes ! Swedes ! "

Among how many of the moderns can we hope to find the like of that ? We shall not find it in Stevenson, assuredly ; nor, probably, in a far different writer of whom von Heidenstam sometimes reminds us—Dmitri Merejkowski.

These episodes—one hesitates to call them short stories, because that name as a rule implies something so different—are of varying excellence. That which opens the book, for example, *The Green Corridor*, seems to be destined in its obscurity and heavy humour to prevent the reader from guessing what feasts are in store for him. Yet the least would be fine in other company. Of the best I feel it hard to express adequately my admiration. With *Poltava*, from which the passage last quoted is taken, I would number in this rank *Fifty Years Later*, *The Fortified House*, *Captured*, *Bender*, and *A Hero's Funeral*. Perhaps of them all I would put first *The Fortified House*. The scene is the Ukraine in the depth of winter cold. The King rides forth at a gallop with a few attendants on one of his fantastic and purposeless expeditions. Left alone at last with a single ensign, he is ambuscaded by Cossacks from a house in the forest. He and the ensign storm the house, in which are half a dozen of the enemy, and rescue a Holsteiner who has been captured by them ; whom they have harnessed to the windlass of a pump, driving him round and round with whip and reins to hoist water. The King allows one of the prisoners to escape and give the alarm.

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Ever farther and farther away on the plain he called his roving comrades with a dismal and lamenting "Oohaho! Oohaho!"

The King hummed to himself as if chaffing with an unseen enemy: "Little Cossack man, little Cossack man, go gather up your rascals!"

The King, declaring cheerfully that since three men cannot ride two horses, they must wait till they can capture another from a Cossack, puts the ensign on guard, after giving him his cloak and faithfully dividing the piece of bread he has with him amongst the three. He enters the house, whilst the Holsteiner strives to keep a flicker of warmth in his body by crouching between the horses in the stable. All night long, amid falling snow, the Cossacks halloo about the place. Both the King and the Holsteiner fall asleep. At dawn they awake to find Cossacks assembled round the gate, but not daring to attack because the ensign still stands, in the King's cloak, his back against the wall, his hands on his sword-hilt. And the ensign is frozen to death. The comment of the King is that, since they are now two only, each can take a horse. The Holsteiner brings the horses out, his heart flaming with hatred for this ingratitude. Then, suddenly, as the King, with shining countenance, mounts and draws his sword to break through, he understands. Racing past the dead sentry with uplifted hat, the Holsteiner mutters to himself: "It is only the joy of a hero in seeing a hero's noble death.—Thanks, comrade!"

We approach here the magical and the mystical. Perhaps von Heidenstam is a mystic, and the

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King is for him a symbol of the strength and blindness of his country in her great days. He shows that he can comprehend his limitations. He puts into the mouths of his counsellors and soldiers and into that of his enemy Peter the Great the justest criticisms of his errors. He expects his men, his whole kingdom, to be prepared to take the blows toward which he himself charges with boyish ardour. But if he is symbolical of that side of Sweden, he represents also its piety and gentleness and essential nobility of soul. There is, as Fredrik Boök so justly says, "a continual dissension between our admiration on one side and our moral demands on the other." It is part of the interest and the essence of the tragedy of this book that these sentiments swing ever, in the long run, to an even balance, with victory for neither.

Maurice Barrès¹

I

MAURICE BARRÈS has returned to *sa terre et ses morts*. The State funeral in Paris, with the President of the Republic following his hearse as the first representative of France, had in this case a very special significance. For, so far as the culture, the ideals and the spirit of a great and complex nation can be identified with one man, those of France were in him. In his strength and his weakness, he was her spokesman. It was fitting that she should accord him that last honour.

It is at first sight curious that this well-founded glory—for his position had been almost as high as it is to-day for many years—should have had so little reflection on this side of the Channel. English people read with avidity the three veteran gods of the *roman*, MM. Anatole France, Pierre Loti, Paul Bourget, and have interested themselves in some of the younger men. But the problem of Maurice

¹ Though there are certain changes in this essay from the form in which it first appeared, I have left the quotations, longer than the others from French authors, in English, as they then were, for the most part.

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Barrès is more complicated than that of any of these. In the first place, there is in all his work a didactic element ; which element he has in subsequent editions of his earlier books emphasized and underlined by means of notes and introductions, in a fashion that shows how seriously he takes himself in the rôle of guide. In the second place, the lessons that he teaches cover a very wide span of thought and action, and appear in themselves, as he goes forward and develops, highly contradictory. To the foreigner striving to take a bird's-eye view of his position, to find a general formula for his doctrine, there is something bewildering in the spectacle of this young and delicate amateur of sensations hurling himself into the bitterest party quarrels, the three great "Affairs" of Boulanger, Panama, and Dreyfus, and fighting in them with a ferocity that in England no internal conflict of modern times has awakened. Not less puzzling has it been to see the "famous individualist" grow into the apostle of national solidarity ; the youth who cried out, "Ah, the dead, they poison us !" become the preacher of the mystic doctrine of "the soil and the dead," of the unity of living and dead, of present and past, in the idea of a nation. A very happy attempt to arrive at a general formula is that with which M. Thibaudet concludes his elaborate study of Maurice Barrès.¹ Recalling the latter's quotation in his speech at the funeral of Paul Deroulède, "*Si vous avez vu un homme un, vous avez vu une grande chose,*" he dwells on the contrast between the two friends, the one so simple, the other so complex. But,

¹ *La Vie de Maurice Barrès.* By Albert Thibaudet.

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he insists, Barrès also is “*un homme un*,” not a unity ready-found, but a unity which has to seek and find itself. In the seeking and in the finding Barrès has given a generation, a French epoch, the true idea of an equilibrium between culture and life.

In one of his earliest books, *Le Jardin de Bérénice*, he outlined in the most frivolous fashion the problem which confronted him then and all his life. The hero, here, as often in his work, himself or some phase of himself, had gone to visit the mournful Saintes-Maries, fabled landing-place of Lazarus, Martha, Mary and Mary Magdalene. Driving back in a storm to Arles he fell asleep in his carriage, and composed an imaginary letter, witty and impudent, from Seneca to Lazarus, who was supposed to have broken his journey at Rome and visited the Court of Nero. The letter contains this typical sentence :

Il vous faut peser si ce vous sera une mode de vie plus abondant en voluptés de partir avec Mesdemoiselles vos sœurs pour être fanatique, en Gaule, ou de demeurer à faire de l'ironie et du dilettantisme avec Néron

Fanatic in Gaul or ironist and dilettante with Nero ? That was the question. His readers could not have guessed that there was one, from his book. This was his third ; and from the literary point of view he had given hardly a sign that he had any desire other than to play the dilettante with Nero. But the problem had posed itself. At a later period, when his reputation as fanatic in Gaul was firmly established and his admirers had decided

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that he was that and naught else, that the problem was finally solved, he astonished and alarmed them with *Un Jardin sur l'Oronte*, returning once more for a moment to dalliance with Nero.

The roots of Maurice Barrès were set very deep in French soil. He had read his Shakespeare and his Dante, and he had read his German philosophers. But the only foreign writer who would appear to have influenced him strongly is Goethe. For the rest, he is the spiritual child of Rousseau,¹ the inspiration of his earliest books ; of Chateaubriand and Lamartine, who must have pointed the way to the combination of literary and public life ; of Michelet ; of Taine, whose philosophy fascinated him when he came as a young man to Paris ; of Renan. He has been claimed as both Classicist and Romanticist. In truth, his cast of mind is wholly romantic in the fullest sense of the term, but his earlier books at least had a classical completeness and compactness of form. In this respect, his influence has been as important as from the philosophical point of view. He began to write in a world dominated by the naturalist school. *Sous l'œil des Barbares* was an essay in classicism, and its symbolical significance was not a little obscure. For six weeks, he has told us, scarce a copy was sold. And when we look at the novels that were popular at the moment and then turn to this delicate, flower-decked, dreamily-sensuous parable we are not astonished.

¹ My Jean-Jacques, the man in all the world whom I have loved best, and celebrated under twenty pseudonyms ; my other self ! (*Le Jardin de Bérénice*).

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It might have been six years but for M. Paul Bourget. M. Bourget had three qualities very valuable where Maurice Barrès was concerned ; he was, though young still himself, winning high fame with another species of revolt from the stuff of the naturalists, the " psychological " novel ; he was an acute and discerning critic ; and he was a kind and generous friend. With one short review he made a name for Barrès. The latter needed no further assistance from any man. Those three " idealistic romances," published under the general title of *Le Culte du Moi*, had in their form an extraordinary effect on French literature. M. Maurras declared that if naturalism and other forms of degenerate romanticism had been stamped out, it was to Barrès and Barrès alone that the triumph was due. Well, naturalism was not killed, for there have been signs that it is about to raise its battered head again, and even had it been killed there were a few others, not excluding M. Maurras himself, who would have deserved some of the credit. But in the liberation of the French novel from a burden that was becoming detestable Barrès had certainly a greater hand than any other man.

The style of Maurice Barrès is curiously variable, changing, as it were, with the rise and fall of the emotions that inspire his work. The contrast between passages in an early work, let us say, *Sous l'œil des Barbares*, in one of the political novels such as *L'Appel au Soldat*, and in a later study like *La Grande Pitié des Églises de France*, is as great as that between the subject-matter of those books.

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The first are delicately chiselled and tinted. The second are passionate, with the passion of the Bible, of Michelet, and of the Chamber of Deputies ! The third afford almost perfect examples of lyrical prose. But within the confines of a single book, even, the differences are almost startling. In style he is as remarkable as in ideas. In this respect he stood with M. Anatole France at the head of contemporary French literature. It were hard, however, to imagine a contrast stronger than that between these two great masters. M. France is incomparably the purer and more finished writer. Not a mark of the chisel shows upon the perfection of his marble. The ripple and flow of the lines appear to us the signs of complete command of his art. Barrès never had complete command either of his art or of himself. As we read his lines we see the conscious aim behind them. We note the strain, can tell where triumph has been achieved and where failure. That is surely a sign of inferiority. There are many others. He can be heavy, pedestrian, even pedantic in a curiously Germanic fashion, which seeks to explain everything till it becomes arid and platitudinous. (Perhaps, dared one hint it, that "blood of the Rhenish valleys" betokened strange affinities !) On the other hand, that very serene impeccancy of the elder precludes unwonted flights. In his great moments Barrès flies higher. His style rises and falls with his ideas. When, as in *Le Voyage de Sparte*, *La Colline Inspirée*, *La Grande Pitié des Eglises de France*, he strikes the soil with his magic rod, causing to bubble forth

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the fountains of the past, it assumes a lyricism and a mysticism scarcely to be matched in French prose. "I surprised poetry," he proclaims with just pride, "at the moment when it was rising like a haze from the solid earth of reality." Such discovery is well typified by the sudden ascent from a swift, straightforward narrative to heights of eloquence and beauty whereon he stands above all the writers of our time.

These few lines on the *form* and the *style* of my subject are all that is necessary by way of preface to a consideration of his *matter*, in the course of which the qualities of the two former will be constantly depicted.

II

Qualis artifex pereo! was the title under which *Le Jardin de Bérénice* was first announced, altered, the author declared later, because he feared that the ladies of his acquaintance might not understand it. The phrase had a particular meaning as regards that particular book, expressing the grief of the man who finds he cannot create a new *Moi* but by slaying that of yesterday. It might, however, be written at the end of his whole early period. *Qualis artifex pereo!* Of what an artist in emotions do I make an end! After *Le Jardin de Bérénice* one last tribute was to be paid to the artist in emotion and the prophet of individualism in *L'Ennemi des Lois*. In a few years the nationalist historian of *Le Roman de l'Energie nationale* was to be born. The Barrès of the later books is indeed linked by

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strong chains to the old Barrès, just as in the earlier books there are not wanting seeds of the Barrès that was to be. But the proportions that make up the philosophical dish have changed. He has himself given one reason for the change in the suggestion that the early lessons he had to teach were lessons for the young man. Naturally, being very young himself, he did not say so at the time. No young seer addresses his own generation only ! his message is for all the world and all eternity. The theme of the trilogy was, as the general title proclaims, the culture of the Ego. We are happiest or at least truest to ourselves when "keyed up" ; the pleasure of being keyed up is increased by self-analysis ; therefore let us feel as keenly as possible and at the same time examine our sensations. "Paradise consists in being keen-sighted and feverish." And let us purify those sensations by being on our guard against the inroads of the Barbarians, the holders of preconceived opinion. But the young man cannot dwell for ever in his ivory tower. Already in *Le Jardin de Bérénice* he has gone forth and come in contact with the people ; and the political election which is a shadowy background to that book is a herald of the new ideas that were to appear.

They appear in the new trilogy *Le Roman de l'Energie nationale*, wherein a variety of themes are represented by the young *déracinés* who flock to Paris from the lycée of Nancy. Briefly, however, it may be said that the foundations of the new creed which he preaches are local traditionalism and national solidarity. Naturally, it is to Lorraine

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he goes to exemplify their struggles against centralization and bureaucracy, though he pays a tribute to the work of Mistral in his native Provence. And when, turning away from the hell-broth of politics, he seeks new fields, it is to the lost provinces he goes again, in *Les Bastions de l'Est*. The Barbarians against whom the Ego has to be guarded, they are now personified. The French Ego, the fine flower of French civilization, is to be preserved from the mechanicians across the Rhine. There, at least, is a strong link between the books of the 'nineties and those of the new century.

The above is a brief *résumé* of the thought of Maurice Barrès. Let us now examine more closely its progress and the books in which its development can be traced.

Sous l'œil des Barbares represents the struggle for existence of the Ego ; *Un Homme Libre* its perfectionment ; *Le Jardin de Bérénice* its contact with the soul of the people. In the first book there is no plot ; it is purely a *roman cérébrale*, a number of "stages in sensibility" recounted in a fashion that gave some early readers trouble to discover their symbolical significance. The young man has a series of adventures. He meets first the "*Bonhomme Système*," from whose lips he receives the lessons we all learn from our elders. He enjoys his "*Premières Tendresses*," which are no more than a kiss upon a mirror. He dreams ; and in his dream Athéné, the pure embodiment of the *Moi*, is besieged in her sacred tower by the Barbarians. The whole is a conflict between the Ego and the Barbarians who would crush it beneath

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their heavy feet—a struggle for existence. Hear them cry without :

“ We are the Barbarians,” they shout, arm linked with arm. “ We are the convinced To everything we have given its name ; we know when laughter befits and when seriousness. . . . We have created the notion of ridicule (against those who are *different*) and the type of good fellow (so admirable is the depth of our spirit) ”

In such a passage the kinship of the young Barrès with the Bergson of some years later is plain.

One of the means for the perfectionment of the *Moi* was travel, and in *Un Homme Libre* Philip¹ goes to Italy. There, in Milan, “ before the smile of Vinci the *Moi* receives its higher education.” In Milan he refines his conception of the Barbarians, in Lorraine his conception of the *Moi*. And already we hear, as drums afar, the first murmur of the voice of the national prophet.

Le Jardin de Bérénice is in some respects the most remarkable book, as a work of art at least, that its author has written. Though the way had been prepared by the two others of the trilogy, this one aroused the critics to a startled admiration. It is indeed an extraordinary *tour de force*. It has its plot, its surface theme, which is by no means without importance, and then, below the surface, its symbolical theme. Berenice is at once a vicious and fascinating girl, the feminine element in the soul, and the unconscious spirit that moves the people, whose suffrage Philip is seeking. Charles Martin is his political opponent, a definite and

¹ The name appears only in *Le Jardin de Bérénice*. Till then the young man has been anonymous.

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living character, and at the same time the shadowy Adversary, the perfect type of the Barbarian. The afternoon passed by Philip on the tower Constance at Aigues-Mortes, "having on his right Berenice and on his left the Adversary," is an epitome of the whole book. *Le Jardin de Bérénice* is, says the author in the preface, "a commentary upon the efforts of Philip to reconcile the practices of the interior life with the necessities of a life of action." It was written, just after a political campaign, "for the instruction of certain readers who did not quite understand that a deep sympathy for the oppressed was the logical development of antipathy to the Barbarians, and of the *culte du Moi*."

Symbolism and that flavour of the *fin de siècle*, as where Philip cries to Berenice, "*Tu dois être mélancholique !*" recalling to us the Baudelaire of "*Sois belle et sois triste*," pass with the conclusion of this trilogy. It is to have a pendant in *L'Ennemi des Lois*, but here the note is changed to reasoning. André Maltère, the new hero, is a Philip carried to logical extreme, pinning down in the show-cases of metaphysics the butterfly theories that have floated so gaily about the other in the Garden of Berenice. Rather than a novel, the book is a study in the effect of the reformers on three typical personages of our day—or at least of the 'nineties—a young socialist professor ; a girl, Claire Pichon-Picard, brought up according to the most advanced methods of the time, a blue-stockings, let us say ; and a Russian princess, a young lady of great sensibility and sensuality, with whom

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taste takes the place of a moral code. André and Claire examine together the French socialists Fourier and Saint-Simon, for both of whom Barrès has always had a weakness which shows that he is in many respects "*l'homme de la révolution.*" They turn to the German Jews Lassalle and Marx, and pay tribute to the fantasy of Ludwig II of Bavaria. André and the Princess Marina at Venice indulge alike their sensibility and their sensuality. The dogs, Velu I and Velu II, take the place of the donkey of Berenice, the spirit of the humble. The end finds all three, with a flock of children and a whole battalion of Velus, in a Utopian dwelling enclosed by high hedges, a "laboratory of sensibility."

Here, in an atmosphere washed clean of all dead ideas, are formed young people who, inhaling only that which is alive, will become founts of that new sensibility which the new complexion of the world demands.

A curious little book that, read for the first time with distaste, is one of those for which my hand most commonly reaches to-day in moments of ennui. It appeared as a feuilleton in the *Echo de Paris*, which arouses reflection on the divergences between French and English daily journalism. As easily imagine *The Egoist* a feuilleton in the *Daily Mail*!

It is less a step on the road of development than a straying to view a vista from a by-path. At any rate, with it and *Le Jardin de Bérénice* is closed the epoch of individual idealism. Maurice Barrès was not to remain a man of one idea. The
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calls of nationalism, which had long ago driven him into political life—he was now Boulangist deputy for Nancy—made themselves felt in the domain of literature also. He cuts himself off here : *Qualis artifex pereo !* A number of admirers remained to weep about the bier, but a great host of new ones sprang up to welcome and go forward with the new prophet that rose phoenix-like from the ashes.

III

Le Roman de l'Energie nationale is divided into three volumes : *Les Déracinés*, *L'Appel au Soldat*, *Leurs Figures*. They may be roughly classed as the search for an ideal, the battle for an ideal, revenge for an ideal shattered. Regarded as novels, their excellence is in descending scale. *Leurs Figures* has high merits, but it has almost ceased to be a novel and become a very vivid history, handled after the fashion of a Michelet or a Lamartine.

Les Déracinés is the most elaborate of all its author's works, the book, one would imagine, which of all cost him most trouble to write. So many of the rest are quasi-essays, peopled with characters who represent emotions or types rather than personalities, that this is remarkable as showing that he can, if he will, handle a great crowded stage of living creatures such as frames the novels of Balzac. In *L'Ennemi des Lois* he had sketched an idealistic scheme of education, which was to be clarified later in the charming booklet *Les Amitiés françaises*, written for his son. *Les Déracinés* opens

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with a sketch of the actual system, as exemplified in the teaching of a particularly brilliant exponent, Bouteiller. In passing, it may be said that Bouteiller is an actual personage, and that he appears both under that and his true name. Readers of *The New Machiavelli* may recall a similar device. Bouteiller "uproots" his adolescent pupils, tears them away from their native traditions and soil, and plunges them into the realm of abstract reason. He himself has no such roots. The whole record is tendencious, often, we feel, grossly unfair, yet sufficiently striking. The man who wrote *Sous l'œil des Barbares* at four-and-twenty might well attack a system which had found no good in him.

Bouteiller goes to Paris, and there go also seven of his pupils, Sturel, Roemerspacher, Galland de Saint-Phlin, Suret-Lefort, Renaudin, Moucheffrin, and Racadot. Bouteiller is subsidized by the directors of the Panama Company, and becomes a member of the Chamber of Deputies. The youths fare variously. Moucheffrin, Renaudin and Racadot go to the bad, the last-named being executed for murder. The other four, young men of family, at least avoid sinking in the Parisian whirlpool, though it is only the opportunist Suret-Lefort, the one among them who has learned aright the lessons of Bouteiller, who makes a great figure. In all the four, perhaps in all the seven, there is, we may surmise, something of Barrès himself, but it is Sturel, the dreamy, the passionate, the enthusiastic, on whom he lavishes his care and affection, whom he employs as the peg whereon to hang so much autobiographical detail. Sturel,

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indeed, the lover of Astiné, the beautiful and tragic Armenian, and Thérèse de Nelles, who ends as Thérèse Roemerspacher, the romantic in politics, is the *héros barrésien*, the up-to-date version of René and Adolphe, and of that other hero whom Lamartine created in his own person. In him above all Barrès proclaims his lineage, and himself a last link in the great romantic chain. And Galland de Saint-Phlin, who returns to Lorraine to fortify himself in her traditions, living the life of a small country gentleman, he is what his creator, in some moods at least, must often have desired to become.

L'Appel au Soldat is a less finished study, but for excitement and dramatic effect superior. Sturel becomes one of the lieutenants of General Boulanger, fighting his battles in the Chamber, in the Press, and on the platform as the writer fought them as a man of eight-and-twenty. He has found his ideal, the quickening of a national conscience under a leader who will free it from the dead hand of parliamentarianism. Boulanger and his cause are of course idealized almost beyond the recognition of modern eyes, and Bouteiller is become a more finished and more formidable Charles Martin, the Adversary personified, who is never seen but from that angle. The inconsistencies of the book cry aloud. No sound evidence, however, has been adduced to support the charges of insincerity that have been brought against the writer, or the suggestion that he used Boulanger merely as a foil to exploit his *Moi*, a flint whereon to kindle his sensibility. On the contrary, that he loved the man and that his love exaggerated

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his greatness, though it did not hide his weakness is apparent to every honest reader. The final struggle, the dwindling band of the faithful toiling feverishly for their stricken leader, who nurtured his dying mistress while one by one his chances slip away, has an intensity and a passion that raise it to the realm of pure tragedy.

Leurs Figures is a history of revenge and hatred. There is in Maurice Barrès, the Baron of *Du Sang, de la Volupté et de la Mort*, and of *Greou le Secret de Tolède*, a vein of that sombre crue which is popularly associated with the Spanish temperament. Sturel, when asked by Suret-Lefebvre why he seeks to destroy the parliamentarians accumulating evidence of their bribery by the Panama Company, replies: "To avenge Boulanger." Not, it will be noted, to strike a blow for justice, to purify the country of corruption! This is throughout the tone of the book. What savage delight in the picture of the Baron de Reinach "that hog of the boulevards," rushing from place to place, realizing himself the victim designed to save corrupters and corrupted, imploring he threatening there, there offering an enormous bribe! It is not without a shudder that we can read, after all these years, the pitiless record of this last phase.

All the evening he rushed about in these dark places like a poisoned rat behind the panelling. How sinister was the receipt at every issue which he sought in his fever! Fiercer, perhaps than his enemies, his accomplices, suspecting or dreading his denunciations, watched for the chance to knock him out with a single blow. . . .

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The Baron reached home at 10 p.m., without having dined, livid from his chase through this sewer. He battled still, but without method and with the confusion of a man who is lost. He was only treading water now. Friends and enemies had come together to drown him. In such fashion a band of housebreakers makes an end of the wounded accomplice who can no longer escape the police.

“ *Il ne faisait plus que nager en chien !* ” Only those who have seen a man at the point of drowning can realize the horror of such a phrase applied to a wretch who had the arsenic in his pocket with which he was to end his miserable life. And in that extraordinary chapter called *The Accuser*, where Jules Delahaye in the tribune, without uttering a name, but looking directly at man after man to whom he referred, declared that this had had so many thousands for his paper, this so many thousands as a mere crude bribe, and this minister so many tens of thousands for secret “ Republican ” funds, the ally of this successful matador watched with pleasure the agony of the bull as the darts were planted home. He delights in the terror stamped on their “ greenish ” faces.

An honourable member had a sort of epileptic fit and barked like a dog. . . . Two of these gentry wept. The honourable M. Boissy d'Anglas played the jaguar and his long-drawn howls struck panic into the Chamber, what time he, crouching forward in his place, sought among his colleagues of the Right a prey wherein to plunge his claws. One of the questors, the honourable M. Guillaumou, crazy with rage, was stopped from rushing upon Delahaye with intent to strangle him.

Well, Reinach is driven to suicide, Bâihaut condemned to imprisonment, others, including an

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ex-premier, brought to public disgrace, but in the main the campaign fails. The book ends on a note of disillusion, when Bouteiller, who has been stabbed in the back and supplanted in his own party by Suret-Lefort, wandering alone at Versailles, encounters Sturel, his former pupil, wandering alone with his own sorrows. It is then and then only that justice is done to Bouteiller, the man of order, and his not ignoble ideals.

I have said that Sturel is of the race of the romantics, and it is perhaps fitting here to glance, before turning to the series of books dealing with Alsace-Lorraine, at those wherein he expresses the artistic faith that is in him, *Le Voyage de Sparte*, *Amori et Dolori Sacrum*, *La Mort de Venise*. He visits Venice somewhat in the spirit of the Princess Marina and Velu.

"I am like Velu," she said. "Put him face to face with one of Raphael's Virgins and he will lick her to find out what sort of paste she is made of. What we do understand is a fine piece of furniture; we like to lie down on it. And I understand fine fruits."

Barrès understands choice fruits also, the fruits of the tree of romance. He dreams of them in his black gondola. Goethe, Byron, Chateaubriand, Musset, all the line of the Romantics, down to Taine, his own master, who have loved Venice and felt awhile in their veins the subtle poison of her fevers, visit him. He proclaims himself of their company. Nothing shows better how deeply the *culte du Moi* has engrained itself on this spirit than these soliloquies. One has only to compare them with those of a French writer of

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almost equal distinction, M. Henri de Régnier, to see that the former goes to Venice not to seek for her spirit, like the latter, but to study its effect upon himself.

Le Voyage de Sparte recalls work of another French writer, ranking like MM. Barrès and de Régnier with the first, and the effect of the comparison is the same. M. Charles Maurras, that Catholic pagan, goes to Athens, and his soul is steeped in the harmony of the Attic ideal. Barrès is appreciative, has indeed noble passages wherein he marks his appreciation, but he is uneasy. He cannot surrender himself. "The blood of the Rhenish valleys" prevents him from a participation in the innermost life of the works by which he is surrounded. We cannot help smiling when we find him attacking a student of the French school at Athens for the destruction in 1875 of a tower on the Acropolis which was a survival of the palace of the Burgundian Dukes of Athens.

The Dukes of Athens! That idea appeals to me irresistibly. Imagine a Burgundian noble building on the Acropolis a palace taking in the Propylæa and the Pinacotheca and reaching as far as the Temple of Erechtheus . . . What, you're not carried away? . . . Oh, I know you well: you're a hellenizing graduate and you care for nothing but antiquity; but suppose I'm a Chartist and a pupil of Viollet-le-Duc, suppose I love Buchon and am a reader of our ancient chronicles, suppose I call myself Courajod or even Walter Scott? The "Greek miracle" is a fine thing, but the French miracle, by which I mean our expansion in the thirteenth century, is not a bad thing either.

That is the true *philosophie barrésienne*, the voice of the Romantic and of the Lorrainer. He compresses it in a note written two years later into

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one of those splendid purple phrases whereof he has the secret :

With all my romantic forefathers I ask naught better than to come down from the forests of the barbarians and to line the royal route, but the classics to whom we make submission must accord us the honours of war. If they would mobilize us under their perfect discipline they must let us retain our rich baggage and our not inglorious standards.

He kept his huge baggage-train to follow his march, and went forward with the old standards still streaming.

IV

It is as the Lorrainer, the Warden of the Eastern Marches, that he appears to his countrymen during the last ten years before the war. He had upheld the cult of the Ego, but the Ego is formed by race, surroundings and time. Nationalism is the acceptance of a determinism ; a Nationalist is a man who has realized of what he is formed. The soil, the dead, were forces too mighty for the individualist to disregard. They made him ; they compass him about. That " French soul, mysterious and marvellous, hidden deep in beings and in things,"¹ in the lost provinces has to be guarded. How is it to be done ? A youth with the symbolical name of Ehrmann tells us in *Au Service de l'Allemagne*, a young girl in *Colette Baudoche*. Ehrmann, called to do his military service at Strasbourg, is faced by the problem that every young Alsatian of those days had to encounter, whether to cross

¹ *Le Moment Sacré* (a study of the arrival of the French troops in Alsace).

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the frontier, to "uproot" himself, or to remain, in chains, but a particle of the old Alsatian civilization, to do his part in carrying on the old tradition. The same problem confronted Jean Oberlé, in the finest of all the novels of M. René Bazin. Oberlé escaped to France ; Ehrmann stayed behind. Not for an instant can we doubt that the latter's was the nobler part. To go was simply to own oneself defeated, to yield to the power of the aggressor, to weaken the hard-pressed *Moi* of Alsace in its struggle with the Barbarians. The problem of Colette was in essence the same. Asmus, the young German professor, who had, as it were, become her pupil in the study of French history and tradition, offered his hand and his heart. She loved him, or had almost come to love him ; and she refused him after a month's hesitation and after attending the Mass for the French soldiers killed during the siege of Metz.

Was she right or wrong ? He believes she was right ; Mr. Wells would tell us she was wrong, and every one will answer the question according to his idea of the principle of nationality. Personally, all my sympathies are with the point of view of Barrès, and yet in this book there is much that I have never been able to admire. It is, I believe, the most popular of all its author's works, and its sale has been enormous. But he seems here too often to "write down" to the prejudices of his readers. Asmus is indeed a sympathetic figure, if rather a ludicrous one, but the whole case of the book is weakened by lack of proportion. We love Colette, but we should love her

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yet more were her charms not always outlined against the monstrous masonry of a Germanism that never was on sea or land. Barrès is not the only author whose slightest work has won widest popular fame.

I have kept the best wine until last, for I shall not touch here on the collected volumes of war-time journalism, except to mention my vivid recollection of French soldiers reading those front-page columns of the *Echo de Paris* in 1918.¹ The last aspect that I shall examine is that of Celtic revivalist. *La Colline Inspirée* is the story of a forgotten religious ecstasy and schism in Lorraine, about the Hill of Sion-Vaudémont. The plot is merely the struggle against authority of a peasant priest, Léopold Baillard, filled with ardour for the old religious tradition of Lorraine, who rises to great heights, to topple down to bankruptcy, beggary and excommunication. But Léopold on the one hand, the Oblate Fathers on the other, are types of the eternal struggle between the voice of nature, of individual inspiration, of the soil, and the voice of order and authority. The battle epitomizes the spiritual career of the man who describes it, and in Léopold Baillard his creator paints ideals, with their glories and their dangers, which have shone before his own eyes. The very spirit that inspired the half-conscious Léopold, he had described it, in language incomparably beautiful, in *La Grande Pitié des Eglises de France*.

See *Memories of the War : I. in The Nineteenth Century and After*, October, 1921

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Prophetic trees, gentle fays of meadow and spring, mysterious breath of the woodland, wind of the evening passing through the coppice, oh fragmentary sentiments ! I cannot see in Nature the substantial gods of the ancients, but for me she is full of gods but half dissolved. Deep in our hearts is a whole vegetation, a whole submerged universe. The Forest of Brocéliande, ancient demesne of the Knights of the Round Table, where sleeps the prophet Merlin, is in ruins, and in his fountain of Baranton, that still wells up, the magic steps are broken. . . .

What is this trouble that touches me ? Are these the gods of my forefathers who have recognized me and hold out their hands to me from the deeps of the wood ? The flesh shudders and recoils, the brain is icy-cold, but my faithful heart bounds within me. Souls of purgatory, forefathers who demand a libation upon their barrows, tutelary deities, and my own awakened instincts, all these religious vestiges of the ancient race call upon me. They wait on us, these little local gods of every grade, and they ask if we are ready to acknowledge them. An anxious throng, discrowned ! And I, to greet them, have for my part no need of the fiddler of the Vosges country, who on the night of All Saints salutes with the notes of his violin the invisible souls that dwell in space. Yet again have I acknowledged from my soul the gods of my forefathers. I have hearkened to their hushed and timid voices. A hymn rises up in my heart and rises up on the dusk-wind amid the trees of solitude.

The opening chapter of *La Colline Inspirée*, headed "*Il est des lieux où souffle l'esprit*," is a still more magnificent affirmation of the same idea, but one from which it is a sort of impiety to quote, marring the treasure by putting a knife into it. But in the last chapter he sums up with a wonderful dialogue between the Chapel and the Prairie, the spirit of order and authority ; the spirit of the earth, of ancestors, of liberty and inspiration. All the man's natural sympathies, all the aspirations of his youth, incline him to the latter.

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But he can reconcile the two, as Merejkowski reconciles them.

"I will shake thy soul," continues the Prairie. "Those who come and breathe my air are swift to ask questions. The labourer climbs up here out of the plain when he has a day of leisure and when he desires contemplation. Instinct draws him to me. I am a primitive place, an eternal source."

But the Chapel says to us :

"Visitors of the Prairie, bring me your dreams that I may make them pure, your impulses that I may guide them. . . . I am the habitation of thy childhood and of thy fathers, I am in conformity with thy profoundest tendencies, of those even that thou understandest not ; here it is that thou shalt find for all the changes and chances of life, the mysterious Word, pronounced for thee when thou wert not. Come to me if thou wouldst find the stone of solidity, whereon to take thy seat and whereon to inscribe thine epitaph."

Such is the eternal dialogue of these two powers. Which shall we obey ? But must we then choose between them ? Ah, may they rather, these two opposing forces, try each other's strength eternally without ever conquering each other and expand through the very fact of their combat ! They cannot do without each other. What avails enthusiasm while it remains an individual fantasy ? What avails order when enthusiasm animates it no longer ? The church is born of the prairie and takes thence its sustenance perpetually—to save us from it.

It seems to us that across the sea of their hatreds and misunderstandings the figure of Sturel stretches out his hand in amity to—Bouteiller.

Marcel Proust

THERE are writers who make their own way to their readers through that jungle which is modern literature, and others who have it hewn for them by the critics. The late Marcel Proust had a good deal of assistance from these woodmen in his own country ; but in England he had a great deal more. Seldom, indeed, in our literary history can a path have been cleared so thoroughly, levelled so perfectly, for a foreigner, in so short a time, as has been his case. Most of the English critics of note have set themselves with enthusiasm to the task, and have, in the space of about five years, secured for him an extraordinary notoriety. On the occasion of his death a few months ago they banded themselves together and produced a very readable book filled with their appreciations. As a result, this Frenchman is to-day as widely discussed as any of our home-bred novelists. It is possible that he is even more discussed than read ; but then the critics can do no more than bring their horses to water. However this may be, his success has been all the more remarkable because he is one of the most "insular" of Frenchmen—and the French, from all points of view save the literal,

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deserve that epithet more than do we ourselves. The attraction to Englishmen of a cosmopolitan such as M. Morel ; one, too, who studied us so acutely from his vantage in Albert Gate, is far more easily to be understood. If Proust writes a foreign word he generally misspells it. He calls the famous German soldier who devised the plan of 1914 "Shieffer," and, when he desires to be very up-to-date, talks of the "revolving" door of a restaurant.

It is open to doubt whether our critics have not in this case gone too fast. That Proust is a considerable writer is obvious to all who have given him intelligent study, even if short. But is he really all that he has been claimed to be ? Is he, for example, our modern—and not decadent—Balzac ? I am not prepared to answer No ; yet, were there put a stake upon my answer, I should say No rather than Yes. In truth I marvel at the temerity of my fellow-critics. They seem to have no doubts, whilst I find myself full of doubt. Proust appears to me to be very difficult to criticize justly. It is a notable young vintage, doubtless, that suits the present taste ; though, even while I say so much, I fancy I detect, like Sancho Panza's kinsmen, some foreign matter in it. That question, however, is not the most urgent. The real difficulty lies in this : how will it "lay down" ? And so, in this short study, I shall attempt to make no definite judgment, because I have reached none. Short of that, the personal impressions of each one of us who has been interested by a writer so extraordinary may have their value in helping to unravel the problem of his position.

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Consider first the man's manner of writing, since that is so far away from the common that it is what inevitably first strikes one on picking up any of his books. The critics have exhausted their adjectives in striving to describe its subtlety. Subtlety it has, to be sure, but that is, alas ! by no means its sole prominent characteristic. The prose of Marcel Proust is finely expressive, but not in the finest fashion. He does not achieve his object by the happy choice of a word which we feel to be inevitable once we have read it, as is so often the case with M. Anatole France ; but rather by the use of many words, by a sustained effort, very conscious and very apparent. It is only rarely that he makes his point at once ; more often he approaches it like a hunter stalking game. In his inconsequence, his "asides," he sometimes reminds us of Sterne, save that with Proust there is never any jerkiness, but a solid and sustained flow of even language, however much caprice there may be in the thoughts to which he is giving expression. That effect of solidity comes in part from the merely mechanical tricks of his style : no chapters or few, long paragraphs, the absence of commas where we should normally expect them. I have found that I experience pleasure at first in reading a passage, renewed each time that I pick up one of his books ; but that after an hour or less there comes weariness and an inclination to turn over two pages at a time. Too often he pursues an idea, a joke, a phrase, to the death. When the good Françoise, or even the Duchesse de Guermantes, introduces a provincialism into a sentence, he must needs track it to its historical

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lair ; and not once nor twice, but every time it occurs. He is for ever explaining, and explaining too much.

And yet, the effect of all these deviations and moralizings and descriptions is in its fashion as remarkable as anything in modern literature. The pictures of men and women, the analysis of their emotions, which they achieve, are bewildering in their perfection and comprehension. It were unjust to compare him in this to a Dutch painter, for the detail of that school is lifeless by comparison with the vitality of Proust's portraiture. Harking back to Balzac, it is at least possible to assert that there has been, since his, no such collection of types in French literature. The analysis of their thoughts goes further than the description of their persons. It is not merely personal but universal ; so that at his best he seems to give us the analysis of the secret thoughts of all mankind in microcosm.

Proust is also a wit of a high order. Yet here again we often find lacking that exquisite sharpness and clarity of outline which marks the finest Gallic wit. With his *mots* the edges are generally blurred, though they may be delightful none the less. The difference is best explained by comparing one of his best passages with one from the wittiest of living Frenchmen. Here is a conversation from *Le Lys Rouge* :

Debout, au fond du salon, des jeunes gens de club, très graves, zézayaient entre eux :

“ Qu'est-ce qu'il a fait pour obtenir le bouton aux chasses du prince ? ”

“ Lui, rien. Sa femme, tout.”

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Ils avaient leur philosophie. L'un d'eux ne croyait pas aux promesses des hommes :

"Encore des types qui ne me vont pas du tout : le cœur sur la main et sur la bouche. 'Vous vous présentez au cercle ? Je vous promets de vous donner une balle blanche.' Si elle sera blanche ? Un globe d'alabâtre ! Une bille de neige ! On vote : Crac ! Une truffe ! La vie est une sale chose, quand j'y pense."

"Alors, n'y pense pas," dit un troisième.

And here "cette brave Oriane," the Duchesse de Guermantes :

"Mais c'est le frère de cette énorme herbivore que vous avez un étrange idée d'envoyer me voir l'autre jour . . . et qui avait l'air d'une vache."

(The Duke, to draw her on, insists that the lady does not really resemble a cow.)

"Je reconnais qu'elle n'a pas l'air d'une vache, car elle a l'air de plusieurs," s'écria Mme. de Guermantes. "Je vous jure que j'étais bien embarrassée voyant ce troupeau de vaches qui entrait en chapeau dans mon salon et qui me demandait comment j'allais. D'un côté j'avais envie de lui répondre : 'Mais, troupeau de vaches, tu confonds, tu ne peux pas être en relations avec moi puisque tu es un troupeau de vaches,' et d'autre part ayant cherché dans ma mémoire j'ai fini par croire que votre Cambremer était l'infante Dorothee, qui avait dit qu'elle viendrait une fois et qui est assez *bovine* aussi, de sorte que j'ai failli dire Votre Altesse royale et parler à la troisième personne à un troupeau de vaches."

There is room for these two sorts of wit, and it may be that the latter will have as many adherents as the former. In any case, it is delightful and the subtler of the two. Yet I believe that in the former there is the purer and more typical Gallic salt.

The matter of Proust springs from his style more directly even than is the case with most great novelists. This is because his descriptions of personages and of *mœurs*—that admirable word

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which covers both our "manners" and "morals"—are what really matter. Of action throughout his series of books there is little. He is never so happy nor so interesting as when he has gathered a party of choice spirits into a room and set them to listen to music and to talk. On such occasions he does continue to keep his reader's full attention for a length of a time so great that few authors would dare to attempt the feat. In *Du Côté de chez Swann* there is a musical party given by Mme. de Saint-Euverte of extraordinary length, and one *chez* Mme. Verdurin in *La Prisonnière* which, with a conversation that follows it, almost fills a volume. In *Le Côté de Guermantes* the talk in the *salon* of Mme. de Villeparisis lasts for ninety close-packed pages, and those pages the finest in the book. It is not, as has been hinted, all talk. There are the inevitable deviations and minute descriptions of persons and their thoughts. There may be more than enough of them, but in this case we must pardon a few *longueurs* for the general brilliancy of the effect. For we have here the world of the modern French *salon* depicted with a delicacy, with an appreciation of its fine qualities of spirit and a gay malice for its foibles, that compel our admiration.

The aristocratic *salon* is, indeed, his own world. He resembles Balzac in this respect at least, one rare among writers of the past democratic hundred years, that he is an aristocrat in spirit and sympathy. But he had this advantage over the elder: Balzac, despite his particle of nobility, was a plebeian. Poor, rough in manners, a recluse and a slave to

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his work, he had to depend for his pictures of the great world mainly upon his magnificent imagination ; and sometimes even that failed him. Proust, on the other hand, lacking the particle, went about in Parisian society and saw its life from the inside. He may laugh at the Faubourg Saint-Germain, but it is quite apparent that it is to him the most interesting thing in this world. The fashion in which he brings out a noble and sonorous name, rolling it, as it were, on his tongue, is evidence of his intense pleasure therein. Hannibal de Bréauté-Consalvi ! Robert de Saint-Loup-en-Bray ! To the ears of Marcel Proust the words made music as exquisite as the fabulous sonata of Vinteuil.

This passion appears to have disturbed some of our critics, amid all their enthusiasm. Yet there is little doubt that it is his study of the French aristocracy which is the most notable contribution of Proust to literature. The charm of that world, which so greatly appealed to him, is very real. The French aristocracy has, indeed, accomplished an extraordinary feat in self-preservation. Deprived of official recognition, it has made itself recognized, and maintained its position as the arbiter of taste. In the public careers which attract its sons, in which the Government cannot do without them ; the army, diplomacy ; it has established its ascendancy, despite jealousies and injustice. Now that they are turning to *la grande industrie* its men seem likely to take the same position. In literature its triumphs have been greatest of all. But, what is still more remarkable, it has kept up its ancient traditions and preserved, amid the rush and bustle of our

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age, the veritable essence of its ancient atmosphere.

At a dinner, a reception, private concert, amidst the beautiful French furniture which seems to draw one away from the modern world, one can *feel* this tradition about one, as in England it is now preserved by a handful of families only. Proust declared that he loved the names of the French nobility because he could read in them the history of France. That is very true. In such surroundings, if one has never called oneself a "Proustian" before, one cannot avoid acquiring that title for the moment. Proust's world forms itself about one. Then, surely, is the Guermantes crowd, under the spell of the exquisite duchess herself, who is being egged on by her duke to new extravagancies of wit; there Mme. de Mortemart and Mme. de Valcourt, each engaged with delicate felinity in the construction of social events in which the other is not to share; there Mme. de Villeparisis proving her affection for the things of the mind to a frock-coated member of the *Institut*. The monocles, with all their varied characteristics and individual significance, of the Général de Froberville, the Marquis de Bréauté, the Marquis de Forestelle, M. de Palancy, glare benevolently upon the prettiest women. And over it all, atoning for frivolities, is that comely and gracious tradition of breeding, good sense, and wit, which takes you, through Proust's Duchesse de Guermantes, far back into the world of which this is the descendant and brings you a faint perfume of the *salons* of Mme. de Sévigné and her kind.

In a country *château* also, the same tradition is

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to be re-won. The king-wood and gilt and inlay, the curves of *Louis Quinze*, the austere fragility of *Louis Seize*, the Beauvais tapestry on the wall, even the slightly less congruous portrait of "mon arrière-grand'mère de—," by Winterhalter, which hangs beside it, form a world of their own, into which the visitor is projected till he feels that he is living history over again. Perhaps, let it be added as a caution, the effect is unlikely to be permanent to an Englishman if he ever becomes more than a visitor. Presently his philistine soul will yearn for an English smoking-room, a huge leathern "club" chair—the French cannot make an arm-chair any more than the English a woman's hat—*The Field* on the table at his elbow as companion to a cut-glass whiskey-decanter and a pound canister of tobacco, and sporting prints after Alken on the walls. Then the spell will be broken. But a visit, at least, combined with the delightful experience of French hospitality, will leave such an impression in the mind.

Such is the world that Proust made his own, with another, the arc of which just cuts its circle, that to which he himself belonged: the *haute bourgeoisie* of talent and wealth. A great doctor's wife, herself a patroness of music, like Mme. Cottard; a great writer like Bergotte, walk in and out of the drawing-room. A man about town like Charles Swann, with no particular qualification save his wit and a certain simplicity which makes him popular, and also because he *is* a fashionable man about town, goes further. He becomes almost an inhabitant of the circle itself. The

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whole is tinged with a last shade of that golden aura which enveloped it completely in the eyes of the hero before he himself had entered it and suffered a degree of disillusionment.

It has another side than the bright. Intrigue, jealousy, and snobbery stalk through its decorous ranks. The Duc de Guermantes is a rake and the Baron de Charlus a pervert. The amours of Charles Swann would make him a villain instead of a hero in most English books ; for few English novelists would venture to suggest that men of fashion—as well as men who do not belong to fashion—are often like Swann in morals, and at the same time charming and beloved. Yet here, even, the balance is pushed down in favour of the great ones. The aura of the “Faubourg” never wholly left it for the eyes of Proust, any more than for the hero who is himself in person. Compare the treatment of the Duc de Guermantes and Mme. Verdurin. The former is selfish, brutal, a bad husband to one of the most delightful women in modern literature. But he is drawn with a care that has in it certainly more affection and admiration than disgust. We are made to hang upon his words. Manners, wit, physique, air, all combine with his title, his descent and his alliances with royal houses to cover a multitude of sins. Poor Mme. Verdurin has no vices but that of being a snob, which she shares with most of the personages, if not, indeed, with all the world, in the books of Proust or outside them. Yet her treatment is almost savage. Her creator has not spared her a tenth of the pains he has given to the man. His

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portrait is, in fact, not far short of a caricature. He cheapens himself in cheapening her, and in one odious passage, describing the chemical smell of her cleaned white-kid gloves, descends to a piece of snobbery that has been employed by any purveyor of indifferent social fiction any time these twenty years. Proust is always on the side of the social angels, even when they are fallen angels.

And yet, once again, snobbery and injustice counted against him, it is in the picture of the aristocratic life of France and in the realization of its significance that lies the triumph of Marcel Proust. It is because, though he became an ironist instead of a worshipper—just as he ceased to love the Duchesse de Guermantes almost as soon as he knew her—because he never lost altogether that sense of what this world had meant in old times, that his heaviness has its moments of inspiration. It is by reason of this, if at all, that he can be ranked among the great novelists.

Puis c'avait été la terre héréditaire, le poétique domaine, où cette race altière de Guermantes, comme une tour jaunissante et fluveronnée qui traverse les âges, s'élevait déjà sur la France, alors que le ciel était encore vide, là où devaient plus tard surgir Notre-Dame de Paris et Notre-Dame de Chartres, alors qu'au sommet de la colline de Laon la nef de la cathédrale ne s'était pas posée comme l'Arche du Déluge au sommet du mont Ararat, emplie de Patriarches et de Justes anxieusement penchés aux fenêtres pour voir si la colère de Dieu s'est apaisée, emportant avec elle les types des végétaux qui multiplieront sur la terre, débordante d'animaux qui s'échappent jusque] par les tours où des bœufs se promenant paisiblement sur la toiture, regardent de haut les plaines de Champagne; alors que le voyageur qui quittait Beauvais à la fin du jour ne voyait pas encore le suivre en tournoyant, dépliées sur l'encran d'or du couchant, les ailes noires et ramifiées de la cathédrale. C'était ce

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Guermantès, comme le cadre d'un roman, un pays imaginaire que j'avais peine à me représenter et d'autant plus le désir de découvrir, enclavé au milieu de terres et de routes réelles qui tout à coup s'imprégneraient de particularités héraldiques, à deux lieues d'une gare ; je me rappelais les noms des localités voisines comme si elles avaient été situées au pied du Parnasse ou de l'Hélicon, et elles me semblaient précieuses comme les conditions matérielles—en science topographique—de la production d'un phénomène mystérieux. Je revoyais les armoiries qui sont peintes aux soubassements des vitraux de Combray, et dont les quartiers s'étaient remplis, siècle par siècle, de toutes les seigneuries que, par mariages ou acquisitions cette illustre maison avait fait voler à elle de tous les coins de l'Allemagne, de l'Italie et de la France : terres immenses du Nord, cités puissantes du Midi, venues se rejoindre et se composer en Guermantès et, perdant leur matérialité, inscrire allégoriquement leur donjon de sinople ou leur château d'argent dans son champ d'azur.

There is another side of his work which cannot be neglected, since it fills so large a space in his version of the *Comédie humaine*. Not only is it the main theme of the volumes that make up *Sodome et Gomorrhe*, but it appears again and again in all the others, from the moment when he introduces Mlle. Vinteuil in *Du Côté de chez Swann*. That is his preoccupation with sexual perversion. It is exemplified especially by M. de Charlus and the girl Albertine. Now M. de Charlus is one of the greatest figures among all the *dramatis personæ* of Proust. He may be a fallen angel, but he certainly does not lack the stature and magnificence of one. While he holds the stage there may be intervals of heaviness, but they are continually dissipated by bright flashes. Yet it is M. de Charlus and not his theme that holds us. Of it Proust has certainly acute and interesting things to say, but full soon we cry enough. As he goes

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on, he plunges deeper and deeper into these abysses, till at last it seems to us that in his own mind he really confuses life itself with one of its aberrations. Albertine, for her part, has none of the personality of the baron, and with her our boredom becomes really acute. I confess that I have never read completely through the first volume of *La Prisonnière*. It appears to be not only gloomy but aimlessly so. Analysis of the tortures of jealousy and dissection of women's methods of lying may be admirably done, but do we want to revolve about them for ever and ever? The only remedy for my feelings that I could discover was to skip ten pages when the strain became too great.

We have done little more than glance at the characteristics of *À la Recherche du Temps Perdu*, with its eleven volumes already published and two more, it is understood, to come. It is to be feared that no high hopes need be founded on these latter. The work of Proust was declining long before his death, either through ill-health or because his themes were exhausted and he could do little more than go over them again. From *Du Côté de chez Swann* and *À l'Ombre des Jeunes Filles en Fleurs* to *La Prisonnière* the descent is dismal. The last few volumes will probably have to hang precariously to the reputation of the first half dozen. What is to be the final fate of these?

It seems to me not impossible that they may recede considerably into the shade as time goes on. In many respects they are too up-to-date. That may help to account for their present success, but what is topical to one generation is stale to the

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next, and sets the third a-yawning. That interminable analysis, carried so far that it often seems pointless, is likely to decline rather than grow in favour as its setting changes and grows dim in the memory. I do not know, nor, having from the first striven to describe merely the writer's effect upon my own mind, will I attempt a comprehensive prophecy. To be quite definite in one's verdict is to be very sure of oneself, or very careless of the weight of one's words, or a *poseur*. I know I am not the first, and I trust I am not the second or third. Yet I cannot think that the charm with which Proust endows the life of the "Faubourg" will ever wholly disappear. It at least should assure him a certain position, if not, as his devotees claim now, one among the highest. The earliest of his books appeared but a few years ago, and he died the other day, yet those pictures seem to take on already the air of an "old master"; at risk of damnable iteration I add once more, possibly a minor "old master" only.

Into the "Faubourg" Proust invites his readers and does the honours with assiduity. Many of the receptions are boring, and there are moments of boredom in all. But the best moments fill the guests with the delight that was the hero's, on the first occasion that the Duchesse de Guermantes invited him to her house.

Je sentis . . . que Mme. de Guermantes avait le désir de me faire goûter à ce qu'elle avait de plus agréable quand elle me dit, mettant d'ailleurs devant mes yeux comme la beauté violâtre d'une arrivée chez la tante de Fabrice et le miracle d'une présentation au Comte Mosca :

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“ Vendridi vous ne seriez pas libre, en petit comité ? Ce serait gentil. Il y aura la Princesse de Parme qui est charmante ; d’abord je ne vous inviterais pas si ce n’était pas pour rencontrer des gens agréables.”

Des gens agréables ! There are fortunately many of them in that world amid those of other sort. It appears probable that for their sake at least there will always be fine spirits in the *salons* of Marcel Proust, as in those of the Duchesse de Guermantes and the Marquise de Saint-Euverte ; but that the finest spirits among them will often, like Charles Swann in those splendid rooms, be compelled to stifle a yawn or hide from their host an ironical smile.

The Problem of War-History

THE subject of the late war is said to be unpopular, but the unpopularity does not, it would appear, extend to war-history. Besides the books dealing with the general history of the war, or of particular campaigns, the politicians' stories of how they forced the generals and admirals to victory, and the generals' and admirals' accounts of how they won despite the politicians, there is appearing a great number of official records of formations and units. These books have their own special public, but it is a large one, above all in districts with a strong territorial tradition. Some people regard them with impatience. I remember being told, when about to embark upon one, that the only sort of work upon the war that a self-respecting man could write nowadays was one that took a "Tolstoyan" view of the catastrophe. I could only reply that I was unhappily no Tolstoy, and that there seemed to be very few of them about; adding that, though the model might be equally difficult, I felt there was equal need of a Julius Cæsar. My critic's point of view was, of course, entirely unhistorical. These histories, if too narrow to be called "history," are of the stuff of which it

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will one day be made. To many people they are precious relics. And, if they are ever to be written, they must be written now. My object here is to suggest that from the writer's point of view they are worth the writing. Of present fame they are likely to bring the historian a comparatively small share, but I fancy that, if he does his work well, his ghost, revisiting this world about a hundred years hence, may find that his name has survived some that were once more notorious. And no self-respecting historian can be indifferent to his ghost's reception when he revisits the haunts of men.

The historian of a formation or unit works within certain definite limits. He must describe operations from the military point of view first of all. Brilliant descriptive passages are useless if details necessary to the military aspect are omitted or are incorrect. Battles and their details will naturally fill a large proportion of his space. But within those limits he has ample scope ; far more scope than the official historians of the campaigns in which his formation or unit took part. He must never allow the battles more than their share. The rest he must reserve for himself. That is, so to speak, his own soul's share of the palette, with which he has to depict the soul of his unit. He has the opportunity, nay, the duty, to record something of the daily life and circumstances, the thoughts and emotions of that multitude which in the days of war lived and died in a peculiar world of its own, a world that will slip from memory with the passing of this generation if he be not adequate to his task. He has to tell how men were fed, how

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they lived in trenches and out of them, how they worked, and how they played. He has to define the difference between their existence in the Salient, round the Loos slag-heaps, and in the Somme chalk. He has to suggest the spirit that animated them, how it reacted to adversity, what compensations they found, and what prophylactics against horror. He has to make real, for those who were not eye-witnesses, the small things that to them were so intensely real. Sometimes, of course, he will find himself trying to convey experiences beyond the power of words, such as the morning smell of a chalk dug-out containing a platoon and a coke brazier ; and others less amusing to reflect upon.

That is his frame-work, often botched or neglected. But in the descriptions of the battles themselves he has opportunities perhaps even greater. How many writers have made a battle of the late war live for us ? I can at this moment recall only a few passages in the late Wilfred Ewart's *Way of Revelation* in fiction, and three or four in various histories ; above all, the fight of Highlanders and South Africans at Longueval and Delville Wood as described by Major John Ewing in his *History of the 9th (Scottish) Division*. The very details, the length of trenches dug and railways laid, the number of shells dumped, the equipment of attacking troops, are precious material if rightly handled. For his military reader they are, indeed, invaluable, but by their means the imagination of the civilian also can be so worked upon that he may be made to visualize the organization of one of the great attacks of trench warfare. How much can

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be conjured up for the mind's eye by the simple record of the things that were provided for the Battle of Messines, that marvel of staff-work ; the water-supply, the communications, the thousands of pack-saddles with their specially made crates, the message-maps, the flares and fans for signalling to aircraft, the rations of oranges, chewing-gum, and lime-juice, with which men went forward on that sweltering day ; the cubes of Oxo, the solidified alcohol for cooking it ; the mines, on which men had toiled for over a year ; the extraordinary complication and precision of the barrage ! The whole of the " Q," or administrative and supply side, which in the British Army was generally superior to the " G," or operations side, is rich with an essential interest to the man who knows how to extract it.

So much for detail. There is, however, far more than this to be conveyed. For example, how many writers have taught their civilian readers the meaning of the words " bravery," " courage," " fortitude," which they constantly employ ? The average soldier was at once less courageous, if one may dare to say so, and more heroic, than the civilian has been made to realize. The civilian reads that after a gallant defence our men were " driven out." He probably does not realize that when the enemy actually reached the position all but a few, the sprinkling with Berserk valour, had fallen back. To enable him to understand that is not to depreciate our soldiers. He must be taught what it meant for one subaltern to gather together a handful of these men, trembling from the shock of high

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explosive, sick with its fumes, dazed and shaken, lost to everything in the world but the one faint light of their training and discipline, and to lead them scrambling and slithering back through machine-gun fire, till those that survive find the trench again empty save for the Berserks among the Germans, who go down before the bayonets as the British went down half an hour before. He must be shown that good troops have a breaking-point, beyond which they can endure no more, with the strange exceptions of a handful of individuals whom it does indeed seem that no human force can break. It should not be concealed from him how weakness arises, not the sneaking little fiend that whispers in the ear in ordinary danger, but a giant within the breast that seems to swell till he bursts it. He should learn of the impulse, keen to agony, to recoil when there is an attack and flanks appear to be uncovered, and how hard the habit of retreat, once acquired, is to eradicate. He must not believe that it is merely the destructive and demoralizing engines of modern war that increase its strain for the infantryman. It is also the absence of physical contact. It may seem platitudinous to describe bravery as the conquest of natural fear and weakness by the human spirit, aided by a mysterious second will supplied by discipline and training, by pride in the record of a unit or formation, by leadership. Yet that is an aspect too often neglected, or stated in words almost meaningless, the insistence upon which can alone give reality to a record of war. And these deeper influences must be stronger now than ever. They are the cords which bind

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men together, and, if like results are to be achieved, they must obviously be far stronger nowadays when men are five or ten paces apart, than when there were but six inches between their elbows.

On the other hand, insistence should be laid on the fact that it required "fortitude" in the truest sense to perform the most commonplace actions prescribed. The men who marched calmly up to take over the line in the Lens craters in 1916, when almost every day a German mine was going up to blot out a platoon, and the explosion was followed each time by a mad, bloody scuffle in the midst of flying bombs to occupy the crater, and none knew when his turn was coming; the gunners who were left in action for a month during the Battles of Ypres, 1917, firing eternal barrages, under almost continuous and terrific bombardment from the enemy's heavy pieces, their shelter a hole half full of water; the infantrymen who had to advance in a second wave when they had seen the first wither away like a scrap of muslin thrown on a red fire—these men were not engaged in what is called an outstanding action, but it was one that in any other circumstances would be fitly called "heroic." That is my meaning when I say that men were at once more heroic and less courageous than they are generally painted. The spectacular incidents of war may seem numerous, but in armies of millions fighting for years they did not touch one man in ten thousand. There were hundreds of thousands of men who fought in the front line, sometimes for many months, were killed or wounded, and ended their combatant career without having seen a German.

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The ideal military historian would be one who, besides possessing the gifts of the historical sense and the knowledge of how to sift evidence, besides possessing the power of describing the conditions at which I have hinted, should have seen those conditions both from above and below. Theoretically we should suppose that the organization of war was a triangle with its apex at G.H.Q., and its base in the front line. In fact, it was the apex that was presented to the enemy. We organized and organized, but the final word was always with the harassed executant in front. We organized too much, toward the end, at his expense, robbing him not only of brains but of numbers, so that in the German offensive of 1918, with all our hundreds of thousands behind, there were moments when a hundred, at a certain gap, might have saved the local situation. In nothing in the world is the difference between plan and result, between the work on paper and the work on the ground, so glaring as in warfare. Those who have seen from above only are inclined to think in terms of paper, of Blue and Red and Yellow Lines only. In such a medium one can imagine a "G," clerk at G.H.Q. giving an admirable account of how the war was fought. Those whose sole experience has been from below can hardly fail to underestimate the importance of foresight and staff-work. Far apart as plan and performance must always be, the gap is ten-fold wider when the first is bad than when it is good. Let us continue to "rag" the staff by all means. The impulse is immemorial and its results doubtless excellent. But let those who are

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inclined to believe that all staff-work is something of a fraud study first what happened when our weary troops, largely made up of immature youths, forced the Canal du Nord and captured Bindon Wood, in September, 1918 ; and then the action of the fresh and dashing American troops against the " Tunnel " Section of the Hindenburg line at the same period.

The task of writing these minor war-histories is one both honourable and important. They are the official tributes, the official expression of the tributes paid in each case by hundreds or thousands of men and women to those who were their comrades or sacrificed themselves for them. I feel that a moment will come when, the reaction from the horror having diminished, not so much indeed as to make either this war or the prospect of another agreeable, but enough for interest in it to be revived, the best among these minor histories will have many more readers than they find to-day. There need be no fear that truthful records, written with imagination, will make war to be more lightly contemplated. The reverse will certainly be the case. But I should like to plead with writers who feel they have the gifts necessary not to refuse the task if it is offered to them. We owe it to future generations that they should miss as little as may be of the tragedy, which is, with all its horrors and bestialities, one of the most enthralling in the history of mankind. Some minds literally loathe the subject now ; that is intelligible, but the condition will not last. I have said we owe a clear and imaginative record to the future, we who saw with our eyes and have all

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the evidence of eye-witnesses. Yet most of all we owe it to the actors themselves and the memory of what they were ; their gentleness and kindness and simplicity, their good-humoured and selfless philosophy, their temper that shook off the horror and depression which might have been more deadly foes than any Germans, and the smiling faces they turned to misery or to defeat.

